# “Girls Interrupted”

## Young Women ‘Growing Up’ in Post-Katrina New Orleans: An Exploration of the Intersections of Genders, Sexualities and Youth

By

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For the partial fulfillment for the degree of PhD

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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## Abstract

This study draws on gender and disaster scholarship, feminist trans/methodology and queer theories to explore how growing up after Hurricane Katrina affected young women's life course, particularly their gender and sexual identities. Gender and disaster scholarship has drawn out the gendered experience of disaster, demonstrating that on a general level, women experience disasters differently to men but also that their strengths, capacities and vulnerabilities can be invisibilised (Ariyabandu 2009; 2006; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009; Enarson 1998a; 1998b; Enarson and Meyreles 2004; Fordham 1998). Within this literature, research has highlighted that women's disaster experiences cannot be overgeneralised and often intersecting identities and processes such as race, class, poverty and economic capacity can affect how women experience disasters (Bradshaw 2014; 2013; Bradshaw and Fordham 2013; David 2012; Enarson and David 2012; Enarson and Fordham 2007; Fordham 2004). It has also been documented that whilst some areas have been well-documented, others, such as youth and sexualities are rather unknown (D'Ooge 2008; Fothergill and Peek 2008; Fordham 2011; Galliard et al 2017). To this end, the study explores the difference between young women by taking an intersectionality approach to research, finding that for this particular group, sexualities were important in shaping their experiences growing up post-Katrina.

Young women are neither adults nor children themselves and therefore are likely to have different needs and interests post-disaster because of these differences. This study shows that young women's needs and interests vary depending on whether they were teenagers at the time of Katrina or whether they were 'older' young adults highlighting that youth cannot be seen as one generalised category, even when gender is taken into account. A key finding within this is around decision-making. Participants who were teenage girls at the time of Katrina often struggled with a lack of agency and decision-making power. Whilst 'older' young women participants were able to make their own decisions, some struggled with this control, particularly where they were making decisions about their lives and relationships for the first time.

In this study, there was a particular focus on gender and sexualities because both are seen to be identities and processes that develop in young adulthood. Furthermore, young adulthood involves many "first times" for young people such as going away or going to college, beginning a new relationship and exploring sexual and gender identities. Under times of 'normalcy' these "first times" can be exciting and challenging but when a disaster occurs, they are often altered in various ways. This study finds that post-Katrina, the way that experiences are altered was not necessarily always negative. Rather, some changed their lives for the better because Katrina opened up new spaces which enabled the young women in the study to make choices they did not feel they could make before.

The findings highlight that young women can experience similar issues post-disaster as their adult counterparts such as fear of violence and gender based violence (GBV) as well as health and mental health issues but their stages in lifecourse change the way these processes are experienced. Furthermore, young women face specific issues to their cohort such as making "first time" decisions in a time of crisis. Overall, the events that young women found to be most important post-disaster were processes that were already affecting their lives but had come to the fore as a result of Katrina. For participants in this

study, these processes included 'coming out' as queer, exploring their sexual and gender identities and becoming or extending their involvement in drag king performance. However, there continued to be an 'age divide' where young women who were teenage girls at the time had less access to collective space due to the adult environment these spaces operated within. Ignoring young women's unique concerns could have longterm impacts where disasters open up new space, but young women are not able to access it.

Overall, the findings of this study show that young women's coping mechanisms and vulnerabilities post-disaster are unique. Furthermore, young women's ability to be resourceful in times of uncertainty and crisis should not be underestimated. Most participants found ways to deal with the aftermath of the post-disaster events such as evacuation, displacement and return in creative and imaginative ways. Even though very little is known about their experiences, this study has found that young women can be highly active, both personally and collectively in engaging in positive change for themselves and their communities. Through their lack of childcare responsibilities and by not being children themselves, young women have been invisibilised in disaster research but this study shows that they are resourceful, imaginative post-disaster actors who are able to use new spaces, both collective and individual to make positive changes in their communities and their lives based not only on their needs, but also on their interests and desires even where they have been ignored.

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**Dedication**

*Dee Cashman*

*1973 – 2013*

*It's not the X-Factor but it is a contribution to knowledge!*

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# PART ONE

# INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## Chapter 1 - Introduction: "Katrina…She changed my life"

*"Engendering disasters should proceed with caution."*
(Bradshaw 2013:185)

This thesis seeks to understand what happens when women 'grow up' in the wake of a disaster. Research about adult women with or expecting children is relatively well documented in disaster work (Delica 1998; Enarson 2012a; Fordham 1998; Mocellin and Motsisi 1994; Rivers 1982; Sapir 1992). Furthermore, contemporary gender and disaster research has drawn attention to 'adolescent' girls (Coalition for Adolescent Girls 2012b; Tanner 2010). However, young women are still missing from the table entirely so that little is known about their experiences.

Gender and Disaster scholarship emerged in the 1990's to address the problem of neutrality and reliance on a technocratic approach to disaster response (Baden and Burne 1995; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Fothergill 1998; Delany and Shrader 2000). Beginning in the USA and often credited to the work of Elaine Enarson, Gender and Disaster scholarship began drawing attention to the difference between women and men's experiences of disaster with the former often losing out and lacking voice (Enarson 1998). Furthermore, feminist scholars from and/or working within the Global South were among the first to highlight how disaster vulnerabilities are shaped by intersecting identities (Ariyabandu 2009; 2006; Ariyabandu and Wickramasinghe 2005; Badri 2009; Bradshaw 2004; 2002; 2001a; 2001b; Fordham 2004; Masai et al 2009; Saito 2012). Since then, gender is taken into account post-disaster discourse but scholars remain concerned that gender inclusion tends to reduce women to their caregiving roles or exploits their roles in order to channel more economically sound 'development' programmes (Enarson and Hearn 1997; Enarson and Meyreles 2004). In particular, women are often defined in

heteronormative and 'adult' contexts. Despite this heterosexualised focus on women, very little explores sexualities explicitly in post-disaster work, let alone queer sexualities (D'Ooge 2008; Gaillard, Gorman-Murray and Fordham 2017; Gaillard, Sanz, Balgos, Dalisay, Gorman-Murray, Smith, Toelupe 2017). As such, the study pays particular attention to the intersections of gender with sexuality as well as youth and examines young women's reflections of their disaster experiences.

The research brings the areas of gender, youth and sexualities together through taking a Queer Theory approach to explore what it was like for young women growing up after Hurricane Katrina, specifically when they began exploring or considering sexualities and gender identities. Hurricane Katrina led to many feminist scholars drawing attention to the need to take account of intersectional identities post-disaster, particularly race and class in the Katrina context where many of the worst affected were classed as the "working poor" or were from poor African American neighbourhoods (Henrici 2010; IWPR 2010; Jones-DeWeever 2008; Litt, Skinner and Robinson 2012; Teirney 2012; White 2012). That said, very little explored the intersections of youth and sexualities even though research emerged that suggested adult lesbian women faced greater discrimination (D'Ooge 2008) and that young people are likely to be affected differently (Peek and Fothergill 2008).

The thesis engages with the concept of queering where every-day heterosexual assumptions are explored as norms. Norms are culturally and socially ascribed so that what can then be explored is destabilising what is natural and what is naturalised. To contribute to this work on drawing attention to the heterogeneity of women, this research seeks to provide a 'queer' analysis of young women's reflections on 'normal' times, returning to normalcy and what that meant for their identities. The findings of the study highlight that in the 'abnormal' time of disaster, many participants were able to find a space to rethink their decisions or make new choices, particularly around gender and sexualities that did not exist in times of normalcy.

## Gender and Disasters

*"But the beginning of things, of a world especially, is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic and exceedingly disturbing. How few of us ever emerge from such a beginning!"*

(Chopin 1969:2-3)

Gender and disaster scholars have lead the way in creating important work in disasters, making women visible throughout the disaster process as agents of change and active participants in all elements of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) (David and Enarson 2012; Enarson and Morrow 1998). They have drawn on Feminist Theory to reveal the social construction of gender roles and relations demonstrating that these are often reinforced in post-disaster settings, regardless of whether women fit within these stereotypes in reality (Ariyabandu 2009; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Enarson and Phillips 2008; Hyndman 2008). Despite progress in getting women 'on the table,' (Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2007) the propensity to group women together as one category is still prevalent in disaster practice and as such, the heterogeneity of women and the colour and tone of their lives that is increasingly documented in gender and disaster research is not always considered on the ground (Enarson and David 2012). To contribute to this work, this thesis explores what happens when young women and teenage girls 'grow up' in the wake of a disaster through engaging with life history research, asking participants to reflect back to 2005 when Hurricane Katrina hit.

Katrina provided a new context with which to critique disasters drawing attention to a range of cross-cutting issues, particularly pre-existing racial discrimination, poverty and class (David 2012; Enarson 2012; Enarson and David 2012; Gault et al 2008; Willinger 2008). Despite rich literature emerging from very early on post-storm, women were marginalised in post-Katrina recovery with prominent gender and disaster scholar, Elaine Enarson warning that a huge step back had been taken (Enarson 2012).

Existing gender and disaster scholarship, particularly early work has led to women being seen as facing increased vulnerabilities post-disaster often due to women being positioned within the private sphere (Weist, Mocellin and Motsisi 1994), and particularly in relation to poverty (Anderson 1994; Bradshaw 2010; Fothergill and Peek 2004; Laska and Morrow 2006). Within this female-headed-households have been brought to the fore as sites of complexity in terms of power relations and experiences of vulnerability and poverty post-disaster demonstrating that women should not be viewed simply through their

vulnerabilities (Bradshaw 2001a; 2010; Delaney and Shrader 2000). This work has paved the way to ask more questions about women's experiences of disaster. For example, it is important not simply to ask about women's experiences but also what kind of women, whether different intersections of identities with gender mean women have different experiences of disaster and also specifically to look at the relational differences of women, not just to men but also to each other.

When exploring gender in research, it is important to take a critical standpoint on dichotomies such as man/women and husband/wife to avoid a heteronormative bias that does not take into account the women whose lives do not fit within a normative frame. By drawing attention to the barriers the gender-neutral approach to disaster created, the research highlighted above led the way to the questioning of gender stereotypes and drew attention to the negative effects they can have on the lives of women when left unexamined (Bradshaw and Linneker 2009). This means that the experiences of women who do not fit within heteronormativity can be obscured, distorted or invisibilised. Queering gender means that the gender lens of analysis can be skewed to look at the stories of women who are placed outside of normative and traditional expectations of women's roles and reveal different stories about their experiences after a disaster.

This thesis answers the feminist call made by Judith Butler, when she encouraged feminist scholars to address the question: "what do you mean by women?" The onus is placed on the intersecting identities of gender, youth and sexuality to look specifically at young women's and teenage girls' experiences of disaster and the impact it had on their lives as they grew up. Young women are seen as non-normative due to their 'lack' of childcare or other caregiving roles and married relationships. Many of the participants who took part in the study were involved with drag performance art. Drag performance simply described is where traditional gender identities are flipped on their heads, most starkly portrayed as females 'playing' males and vice versa. In reality, drag performance art is far more complex involving 'playing' with gender and sexual identities and will be explored in depth below. Although not always the case, drag performance can be seen by its participants as transgressive acts and the drag performer participants in this research identified with this notion. Indeed, feminist research has discussed drag performance as a type of queering (Butler 1996). Many participants also became conscious of gender and queering allows for space to hear these stories, experiences and decisions about their sexual and gender identities as they 'grew up.' Thus the study aimed to explore whether and how young women negotiate gender and sexual identities particularly around life decisions linked to gender and sexual identities.

Consideration of Queer Theory provides an opportunity to explore queering as an approach to research. Queer Theory provided a platform on which to interrogate and deconstruct social systems of meaning in order to reveal the fiction of compulsory and normalized heterosexuality. Simply put, it is the notion that all categories are social constructs and thus their meanings can be redefined (Applerouth and Edles 2011:375). The notion and practice of 'queering' has been identified as way to challenge gender norms, emerging from Queer Theory.

## Queer Theory

*"The clown may be the source of mirth, but – who shall make the clown laugh?"*

(Carter 1984:140)

A queer perspective to explore gender and disaster is relatively new. This is important for this and other research for several reasons. Firstly, the research is about exploring sexualities in their multiplicity without pre-discursive notions of either gender or sexuality. It is also important in terms of the conceptual framework that seeks to problematise what is seen as natural. This analysis applies to the notion of disaster itself as well as the subsequent disaster processes such as relief, recovery, rehabilitation and resilience as well as individual and collective identities around normative sexuality and gender identities for young women. The thesis looks specifically at young women's reflections on 'normal' times, returning to normalcy and what that meant for their identities, finding that in the 'abnormal' time of disaster, many participants were able to find a space to rethink their decisions particularly around gender and sexualities that did not exist in times of normalcy. The research seeks to bring these areas together through Queer Theory using a queering approach to analysis, problematising the boundaries between what is seen as natural, unnatural and naturalised.

Queer Theory emerged from LGBT studies and gender/women's studies in the 1990s in response to heteronormativity in gender/women's studies at the time and conflicting agendas in the LGBTQ movement (Applerouth and Edles 2002:373; Butler 1990; Sedgwick 1990; Stein and Plummer 1994:181). The most fundamental concept, 'queer' was then turned from a derogatory term directed at gay people to a positive identity for LGBT people that was intended to go beyond the political constraints of the LGBT movement and recognise broader queer identities than those in the identity-marker, "add-on" approach of LGBT and now "Q," sometimes "I". These political constraints included the tendency for LGBTQI movements to be based on acceptance and integration models. That is, rather than

problematise normative behaviours, LGBTQI principles tend to align with (hetero)normative culture and society, associated with the notion that "we (the gays) are just like you (the straights)" seen particularly through the premium positioning of gay marriage within the agenda (Halberstam 2012). What happens with this approach is that these kind of 'minority group strategies' tend to leave the 'centre' (heteronormativity) intact and reinforce otherness (Stein and Plummer 1994:183). Queer Theory on the other hand positions otherness in the centre rather than attempting to demonstrate a desire for assimilation. This can be seen through the slogan of the queer movement, "we're here, we're queer, get used to it" where the marginal 'queer' identity is placed firmly in focus.

'Queer' as an 'umbrella' term is also more inclusive than the identity-marker approach of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, which often ends in an uncomfortable "etc.", so in 'theory' includes anyone outside of heterosexual normativity (Jagose 1997). Here it is hoped that 'queering' provides a space to put into words the relational and complex natures of gender that gender and disaster scholars have been drawing attention to in disasters. This means that there is scope for individuals to explore their gendered-sexualities without rigid parameters of what is seen as socially and culturally appropriate or stereotypical for given sexual and gender identities. 'Queering' is also an action or set of actions – something that actually happens whether through invention or increased attention to something 'odd' or uncanny that becomes visible in the public.

Scholars have argued that queering has an affinity with the realms of the uncanny precisely because both concepts draw on hidden truths and more explicitly, seek to problematise what is seen as 'natural.' Whereas queering seeks to fully reveal these 'truths,' the uncanny is the space in which truths are just out of reach, often invoking feelings of horror. According to Royle, the uncanny is "a crisis of the natural touching upon everything that one might have thought was part of nature: one's own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world" (2003:1). Royale feels queer identity can be situated within this space when it is something that is known but not spoken or hailed, but seen as some kind of crisis against nature. Interestingly, a 'natural' disaster is often characterised as crisis of nature, destroying the natural and normal world. However, within this gender and disaster scholars in particular have suggested that rather than destroy the normal world, disasters provide a window through which to view society's underbelly (Ariyabandu 2006; 2009; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009). Queer Theory extends on from this understanding of disasters as a window of revelation and provides a lens through which to 'undo' what is seen as normal life and what is not. To take Queer Theory to the most radical end, it is normativity that is revealed and thus "articulates a

radical questioning of social and cultural norms, notions of gender, reproductive sexuality, and the family" (Smith 1996:280). Queering and the uncanny then have a lot to offer in terms of gender and sexuality in disasters because they describe the space through which not only to view as the window of revelation, but suggest a space in which to challenge, act and question societal and cultural norms.

## Queering

*"The construction of sexuality deeply informs the whole organization of communities."*

(Gosine 2005:9)

To queer is to 'trouble' normalised traditions to reveal these norms to be fictions and therefore unnatural. That is, to demonstrate that norms, traditions and processes can be learnt behaviours that appear to be natural on a surface level but when they are questioned and read from a different lens, the unnaturalness is revealed. Queering then takes normalised representations of sexuality and re-reads, re-performs and re-imagines them with the explicit purpose of 'troubling' the status quo (Filax, Sumara, Davis and Shogan 2005). Queering can be linked to the way that feminism sought to make trouble with gender, in reference to Judith Butler's famous text, Gender Trouble (1991). Therefore, a queering approach could also be important for gender and disasters who have been drawing on feminist literature and creating their own feminist literature that draws attention to the relational 'nature' of gender for some time (Ariyabandu 2009; Ariyabandu and Wickramasinghe 2005; Bolin, Jackson and Crist 1998; Bradshaw 2013; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009; Enarson 2012a; 2012b; 2002; 2000; 1998a; 1998b; 1998c; Enarson and Phillips 2008; Enarson and Fordham 2001a; Enarson and Meyreles 2004; Fordham 2011; 2004; 1998; Fothergill 2004; 1998; Tierney 2012). Within this literature, scholars have suggested that identity such as gender and sexuality changes the way life, an event or a process is experienced which is akin to the premise of Queer Theory in that both seek to reinterpret and trouble what is seen as 'normal' experience (Bradshaw 2013; Fordham 2011; Gaillard et al 2017a). What queering does is 'play' with these arguments and creates or draws attention to ways of seeing and being in the world from another or an "other" position.

The most extensive body of feminist work engaged with queering and Queer Theory has emerged broadly from within the Humanities, particularly within Gender and Media, Gender and Literature and indeed, feminist literary writing. Much of the scholarship here

has paid attention to 'undoing' cultural and social myths around what is considered to be 'natural' female behaviour, particularly but not limited to the western world (Cohen 2007; Gerhard 2005; Gill and Herdieckerhoof 2006; Kolehmainen 2010; McNicholas Smith 2017; Moore 1994; Russell 2000; Tasker and Negra 2007;Taylor 2012; Zhao 2016). Within feminist literary fiction, both authors and scholarly critiques have also engaged with queering in interesting ways, particularly well explored through Henrietta Moore's interpretation of Angela Carter's The Passion of New Eve, highlighting how feminist literary texts can play with gender and sexualities to reveal not only their fiction but through imagining a fictional reality, are able to present a "kaleidoscope of possibilities" (Moore 1994). Adding to this kaleidoscope can be seen in the work of feminist authors throughout history to contemporary times (the work of Sarah Waters is a recent example).

Fiction authors such as Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson and Sarah Waters "queer" traditional literary and genre fiction and can be said to "trouble" notions of sexuality and "queer female heterosexuality" (Russel 2000). What is interesting about the notion of fictionalising is that it can be used to tell and retell real stories or imagined stories for the future. In terms of the participants in this research, many of whom are engaged in creative work, the explorations of self-storying is an intersecting way to view the stories told and the stories imagined. When written to explicitly unpack norms, such as The Passion of New Eve, the author is creating a re-telling of worlds and challenges the reader from the beginning. Within Feminist Media Studies though, the critique has problematised 'standard' rules within mainstream fiction and television. Reading normative media texts through a queer lens reveal how normative representations of gender frame opposing identities as "at odds" with conventional life but that in reality, 'oddities' in human experience, specifically women's experience, are more normal in lived realities than what is presented as normative. That is, not only is culture far from monolithic, but that lived realities are even more complex within cultures. Within this thesis, culture is important in this particular respect as it explores youth, sexuality and gender through subcultures that the young women participants identify with.

## 'Doing' Queering

*"[Freud's Uncanny] deal[s] with the nature of incertitude [and] is approached…with a sense of distrust and fascination"*

(Cixous 1976:526).

Queer Theory and activism seek to 'play' with boundaries and unmask cultural constructions, specifically of gender and sexuality stereotypes (Jagose 1997; Halperin 1995). It is interesting that disasters are also charged with revealing what already exists but remains hidden until after the event. Perhaps it is better to think of the disaster as a queer event in itself due to the fact that it brings attention to the hidden but paradoxically not unknown secrets of a culture and society. Gender and sexualities are crucially linked to disasters as uncanny events because sexuality is a key component of the uncanny and gender provides further context to naturalised sexualities. Queering allows us to re-read gender in disaster terms and reveals the difference between normal and normative which can be linked to gender empowerment. Even though this would be complex, the revelations may lead to better strategies and solutions.

Queering can be seen as a set of acts that invoke specific revelations around gender and sexualities. These queering 'acts' also often involve some sort of revelation of the 'uncanny' performance. The uncanny is particularly useful in terms of queering. Indeed, key Queer Theory authors such as Creed (2005) and Royle (2003) have linked the uncanny to Queer Theory. Uncanniness reveals the self to be an 'other,' (Kalikoff and DeLamotte 1991). Freud points to Schelling's definition where the uncanny, is "*everything that was meant to remain secret and hidden [that] has come into the open"* (Schelling cited in Freud 1919/2003:132). This 'something' has the power to invoke discomfort, horror and shame. In this sense, the uncanny "*expresses* drives which have to be *repressed* for the sake of cultural continuity" (Jackson 1981:70). Disasters are identified by gender scholars as something that also 'reveal' what is hidden (Enarson and Morrow 1997).

The uncanny reveals these drives as something that is not quite hidden through the invocation of a 'mood' where something within it acts as "a breath" of "provocative air" (Cixous 1976:525). The uncanny, most of all is a "feeling" (Freud 1919/2003:124) and it is meant to shock and cause discomfort in order to challenge normativity. Individuals are taught through civilisation that they should repress unacceptable forms of sexual desire and behaviour (Creed 2005:485). Thus, the uncanny, is explicitly linked to sexuality and a crisis of nature as well as to the nature of crisis like a disaster, both of which are seen to reveal that which has previously remained hidden.

## 'Doing' Gender Analysis

*'Yes, I've often thought it must be exhausting to be a woman.'*

*'It is, if you do it properly. Which is why I so seldom do...'*

(Waters 2009:270)

The 'art' of doing gender does not necessarily create unified categories of women and men. From a feminist psychoanalysis point of view, Jacqueline Rose reminds us that we are not 'born' as women and men but we become so through a struggle with our unconscious and repressions of sexual desires within the unconscious (Rose 2005). This was a central theme in de Beauvoir's writing in the 1950's, most notably in the famous quote: "woman is made; not born" (de Beauvoir 1989, c 1952) highlighting that feminists have been engaging with the 'unnaturalness' of woman as a gendered category for quite some time. Although de Beauvoir's statement was an essentialised and universalised proposition attempting to describe all women, her theory has value because it provides a language through which to have a discussion that could have political consequences – that the categories of 'women' and 'men', 'boys' and 'girls' themselves must be called into question and the sexed categories linked to femininity and masculinity must also be questioned. If we are to look at how people 'do' gender, there may be many more gendered 'categories' to consider.

Gender plays but one role in the constitution of the subject and thus does not provide one singular, monolithic framework (Braidotti 2002:288). Not only is gender increasingly seen as something that varies cross-culturally but is also understood by feminist scholars as a dual system of symbols, characterised as not something we have and are, but something that we *do* (Braidotti 2002:296; Connell 2009b). That is, gender is not so much about 'biological' characteristics of people but about their socially and culturally ascribed roles and relations (Connell 1983; 1987). In this sense, "doing gender" takes into account gender as a fiction (Connell 2009b;1993; Moore 1994).

Gender becomes written on the body and the biological body is thus implicated in so-called natural gendered behaviours. However, the distinction between sex and gender where gender is the cultural construction and sex (biological sex) is the body with which one was born and therefore 'natural' remains a dominant understanding. Mainstream 'gender agendas' of development echo this understanding of a sex/gender binary with the onus placed on 'gender' (See ILO 1999-2016; WHO 2014; World Bank 2016). The lack of critique of 'sex' particularly in terms of sexuality in relation to gender can be seen in the continued reliance with describing women's rights, gender equality and gender empowerment in biological terms such as women's maternal health, particularly within

the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework and to some extent within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework that came after the MDGs. Women's roles are often fenced within rigid parameters placing women's roles as within the family, particularly in relation to children, ergo placing women as naturally assumed to be heterosexual. More recently, women as a category have been unpacked to include teenaged girls as a 'new' category that places them as crucial targets of development empowerment with the justification uncannily similar to the biological traits above, thus conflating the biological with naturalised behaviours of caregiving and community altruism (Chant 2016).

Within disasters, there is recognition of 'cultural differences' in relation to gender and how these differences can exacerbate inequalities and resilience (Ariyabandu 2009; 2006; Bradshaw 2013; Enarson 2000b; Plan International 2011; UNISDR 2009a.). Many more are concerned with the intersections of gender and poverty in DRR (See Oxfam 2011a; 2011b; UNESCO 2014; World Bank 2012; WFP 2011). This attention to cultural differences and thus recognising that 'third world' women have different concerns can be traced back to the Women in Development (WID) paradigm. However, emerging from a specific western type of feminism based on the ideas of liberalism, WID approaches resulted in an essentialised view of third world women (Mohanty 1998; Jayawardena 1995). Rather than seeking to transform gender relations, WID took an approach known as "add women and stir" (Harding 1995) with the view that adding women would lead to 'empowerment' However, attention to the complex gendered power relations, cultural specificity and diversity was lacking and so these remained unchanged.

WID was challenged by critical feminist scholarship which was attentive to women's diversity and gender relations, transforming into Gender and Development or GAD, for short. There is much important feminist work in GAD and indeed, many development organisations now claim to 'do' GAD. However, feminist scholars have also continued to call for a deeper, more critical understanding and deconstruction of 'gender' within development, often warning that we should be critical of those who claim to do 'GAD' but in practice do not seek to challenge unequal power relations (Cornwall 2003; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead 2007a; 2007b; Mukhopadhyay 2004). Many are sceptical that what is claimed as GAD, in practice continues to be WID (Brown 2007; Chant 2016b; Chant and Gutmann 2002; Parpart 1993; Razavi 2016; Razavi and Miller 1995). Within this body of work is a questioning of the narrow definitions of women and gender, suggesting that they are hard to destabilise and even where new "buzzwords" and "fuzzwords" appear, it may be more lip service than real change (Cornwall 2007). Cornwall, Harrison and

Whitehead (2007a) have also warned scholars to be wary of our own feminist "myths" and "fables" that create stereotypes about women that are either no longer meaningful or misrepresent the diversity of women's experience, linking to Butler's (1996) call for feminist scholars to question what we mean by invoking the category "women."

For example, in this discourse, 'woman' is often presented as poor, 'ethnic', adult, and situated within heterosexual family relations. She is constructed as adult, with or wanting children and within a heteronormative family structure, all of which are demonstrated clearly in media campaigns to incite donations. In fact, women have been used to illustrate the 'face' of poverty and deprivation for some time by NGO's further reinforcing women as hapless, crying victims often with children they cannot properly care for and paradoxically as the force of change if only their 'natural' skills of caregiving and altruism could be realised. One (2016) and Oxfam (2016) media campaigns demonstrate examples of women as the face of poverty (see figures 1 & 2). Even though often 'doing gender' means 'doing women' the paradox is that not all women are taken into account resulting in norms and assumptions about women generally as well as women in disasters. Thus, a specific normative woman is created and visibilised at the expense of actual women who are diverse in their identities and their experiences.

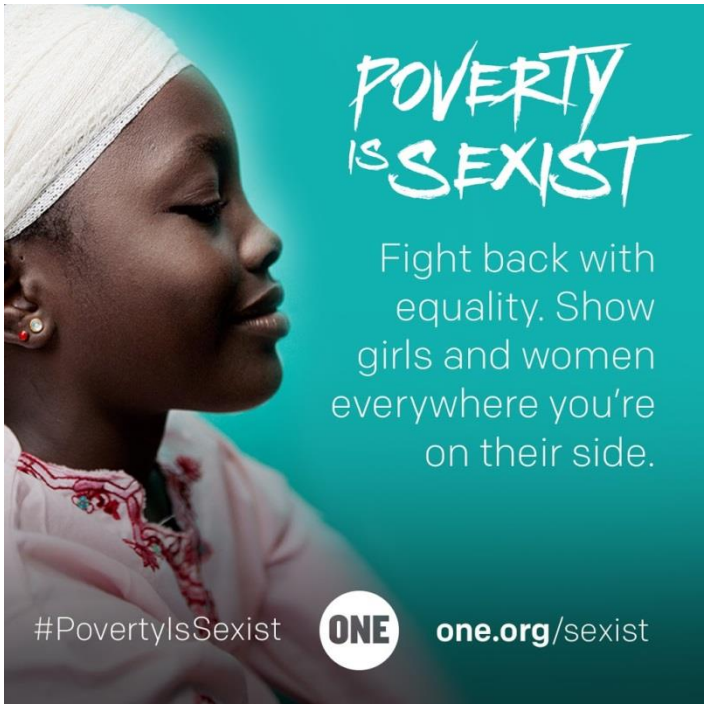


Figure 1: "Poverty is Sexist" (One.org 2016)

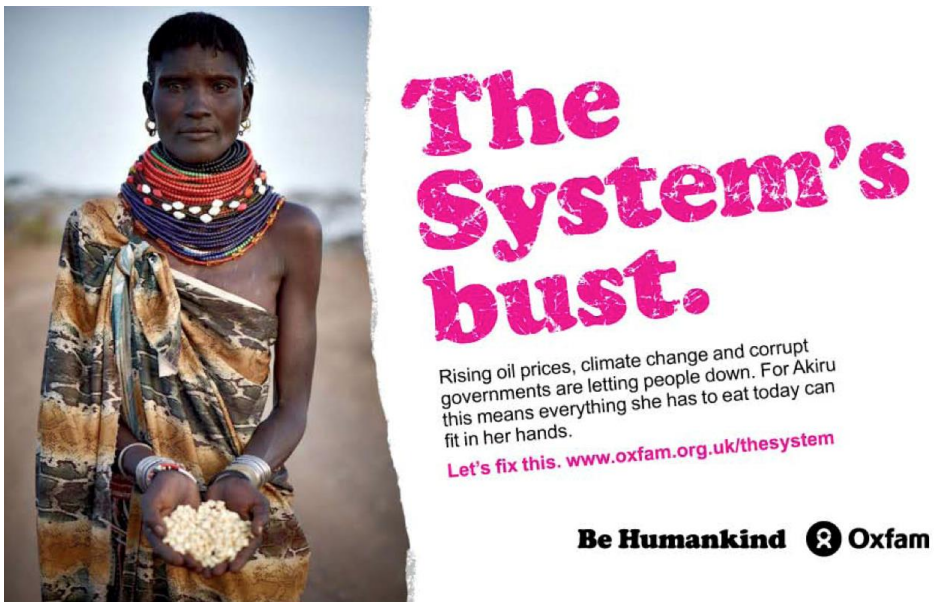


Figure 2: "the System's bust" (Oxfam 2016)

– Nearly all their disaster work features a woman in the picture.

Despite the critique of a universal category of 'woman,' women and gender continue to be narrowly defined in Development and by extension, in disasters too (Hyndman 2008). Speaking in broader terms about feminist research more generally, Judith Butler called for feminist scholars to explicitly clarify what we actually mean when we invoke the descriptor of 'woman' (this will be explored in more detail below). For example, in disaster terms, women are often described in relation to their children, caregiving and homemaker responsibilities usually because these roles can increase their risk to being invisibilised or increase their vulnerabilities due to increased burdens and confinement in the private domain (Buvinic, Vega, Bertrand, Urban and Natata 1999; Delaney and Shrader 2000; Enarson 2001a; Peek and Fothergill 2008). However, this has led many to view women in disasters in relation to these roles but not to others. Whilst much work has been done to change this and demonstrate women's active roles such as in immediate relief and recovery, employment and decision-making, the women that are talked about are often adult women (Ariyabandu 2009; Enarson and Phillips 2008; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Yonder, Ackar and Gopalan 2005). Young women are not differentiated and young women may not have the same concerns so whilst the needs of married/mothers adult women might be taken into account, the concerns of those who do not fit within these roles may not. This does not just include gender with the axes of age but here demonstrates that this missing identity may result in the misrepresentation of the experiences of different kinds of women as identified by other researchers in relation to elderly women and disabled women (Ishrad, Mumtaz and Levay 2012; Mitchell and Karr 2014). Indeed, Phillips,

Thomas, Fothergill and Blinn-Pike (2010) draw attention to the cultural and social subjectivity of age and the roles and relations associated with it as a potential factor for making gender more inclusive post-disaster.

This work has led to some change in the discourse on gender and disasters over recent years resulting in a more nuanced understanding of women and gender post-disaster (AWID 2010; Bradshaw and Fordham 2013; Fordham 2004). From taking into account women's active roles in rebuilding communities (Akcar 2001; Mehta 2009; Saito 2012) to the concerns of elderly women (Mitchell and Karr 2014; Ollenburger and Tobin 1998), women's diverse roles, responsibilities and identities have begun to be taken into account in DRR, at times translating into policies and programmes (Glyde 2012; Devereux 2011; IDMC 2011:10). This demonstrates how other identities and needs are being considered but it seems to be 'trickle down' and ad hoc rather than systematic. Programmes for 'other' women do exist but they are not the norm and in terms of policy, very little is known, further reinforcing the suggestion that accounting for women and gender as diverse and intersectional is not yet mainstream in practice.

Mainstreaming itself is also a problematic goal and inclusion does not automatically mean transformation or positive change. Ines Smyth's blog post for Oxfam following International Disaster Reduction Day in 2012 highlighted a group of older women in Thailand who are DRR volunteers acting as security guards for their communities (Oxfam/Smyth 2012). This highlights that 'other' women have important roles but Smyth goes into little detail in terms of expanding the notion of gender and instead brushes them into a general comment that "women, men, boys and girls all have the right to protection from disasters" (Oxfam/Smyth 2012). Whilst it is right that a gender focus is needed in DRR work, it is disappointing that the fact that older women are a little discussed group was overlooked, even though the blog post title 'included' them. Neither their resourcefulness nor their specific vulnerabilities are addressed. Inclusion itself then, must be problematised (Bradshaw 2014; 2004; 2001a; 2001b).

Research has shown that age affects the disaster experience of women and men, and even through the existing research is limited, most demonstrates differing age experience with regards to the elderly (Adams, Kaufman, Van Hattum and Moody 2011; Ardalan, Mazerheri, Vanrooyen, Mowafi, Nedjat, Naieni and Russel 2011; Melick and Logue 1985). However, there is still much more to be explored around the concept of age because no systematic research has taken place as yet. The axis of age and gender remains on the margins, and this is even more so for young women.

## A Gender Continuum: From sex/gender to sex-gender

*"What is straight? A line can be straight, or a street, but the human heart, oh, no, it's curved like a road through mountains."*

(Tennessee Williams 1947)

Doing Gender cannot be a standalone project but must incorporate sex, sexualities and age along with identities that intersect and create different disaster experiences for different groups. Doing gender is interrupted by an assumed pre-existing and ahistorical biological sex that is already inscribed. However, the symbolism associated with biological sex means that it is impossible to escape normalizing habits. For example, declaring "it's a girl!" means far more than biological sex (Butler 1991). In each cultural context this declaration implies a set of rules, regulations and norms that will be instilled from birth. "Our sexed bodies are thus seen as "coat racks" that provide the sites upon which gender is constructed" (Nicholson 1994:81). Women's bodies have long been sites to produce gendered discourses of power at national and community levels (Ahmed 2002; Jaywardena 1995; 1986; Jeffreys 2014; Levine 2000; Yuval-Davis 1997), blurring the lines over what is natural and what is naturlis*ed.*

In order to take into account multiple expressions of gender and identities, feminist thought has moved away from the binary of sex/gender to the 'gender continuum.' The sex/gender distinction first conceived by Gayle Rubin in 1975 had much to offer at the time and provided a way of separating what was perceived to be biological: sex (the sexed body) and what was behavioural: gender (the masculine/feminine roles prescribed to these bodies) helping to rupture the idea of a stable and essential subject (Applerouth and Edles 2011:372). Rubin linked gender explicitly to (hetero)sexuality, detailing how particular women and men are constituted and drew attention to the ways in which some women and men are seen to have failed in this task by not being "properly" heterosexual because they do not perform the normalalised gender behaviours associate with the corresponding male/female heterosexuality/sex. This is very much linked to the notion of 'doing gender.' For example, by separating sex from gender Rubin enabled us to see the difference between what is 'naturally' biological and what is created by social frameworks. Sex was assumed to be pre-existing and apart from culture, and therefore seen to be natural.

Moreover, the sex/gender distinction challenged the ethnocentricism and androcentricism in traditional anthropology, diversifying the category of woman (Rubin 1975). Rubin suggested that the sex/gender system could be used as a cross-cultural and universal tool but criticisms emerged early on, particularly within *ecriture feminine* that the distinction between sex/gender privileged western thought and created a hierarchy between the two categories *(*Gatens 1992:232). Cixous (1979) in particular drew attention to the assumption that there exists male/female biological sexes that preceded history and exist outside of culture and therefore without a history (Cixous 1979; Yuval-Davis 2006). Indeed, binaries will always create a hierarchy between the two as well as exclude everything else.

The gender continuum destabilises this binary thinking and also in turn called into question the category of sex. Theorists such as Mayne, Butler, Fuss and Wittig, going further still, suggested that sex was not natural at all and was in fact just as invented as gender (Applerouth and Edles 2011:375). For example, rather than asking the obvious second-wave feminist question "what about women?" Butler called the very notion of woman into question by changing the question to "what do you mean by women?" (Butler 1990:145). This forces us to clarify who we are talking about when we invoke the term 'woman' and reveals how often, we are not talking about all women. Indeed, it would be impossible and 'un-feminist' to do so. Butler's is arguably the most comprehensive critique of the sex/gender system (1991). More than a critique she also proposes an alternative: the gender-continuum.' She sought to highlight the "fictive" nature of 'biological' sex in the sex/gender system to show that sex, like gender is culturally constructed and a "norm" in itself (Osborne and Segal 1994). For example, what is actually normal, like the beating of a heart is very different from what is normative, such as becoming married (Richardson, Smith and Werndly 2013:44). The consequence is the creation of a stereotype that invisibilises some and normalises others.

As discussed above, women in relation to disasters are often understood by particular characteristics, such as altruistic and naturally caregiving. However, research has found a myriad of 'missing' women from sex workers (Valdes 2009:19), to lesbians (D'Ooge 2008) to disabled women (Ishrad et al 2009) to elderly women (Mitchell and Karr 2014) – all very diverse sub-categories with subjectivities of their own, as cohorts and as individuals, in turn.

Gendered subjectivity then is not fixed nor is it essential but rather it is something that one 'does' through repetitive and ritualised acts (Applerouth and Edles 2011:372). 'Acts' that are social and cultural constructions become 'normalised' and thus appear 'natural'

and even as a biological difference. Sex and gender then cannot be divided and need to be read in relation to one another as well as in relation to sexuality. This is important for a more nuanced understanding of gender because the onus is placed on the difference between what is biologically 'normal' to what is normative.

Using this theoretical perspective, the categories derived from biological sex with regards to sexual identity and behaviour, i.e. normative and deviant are also socially constructed and normative. For example, feminist scholarship on popular media in US and UK contexts have identified how 'lifestyle television' can promote culturally specific ideals around normal and abnormal femininity (Bordo 1993; Covino 2004; Coward 1994; Gill 2007; Hollows 2000; McRobbie 2004; Roberts 2007). Femininity, like masculinity, is attributed to certain characteristics and whilst these can vary cross-culturally, are often framed as natural and by extension, biological. However, even by definition, femininity is not a natural state, but rather a site of struggle (Rose). If we see 'sex' as a social construction within gender, we are able to question such arbitrary characteristics rather than allowing them to be seen as important (Yuval-Davis 2006:205). For example, Butler has pointed out that discrimination against gay people is a function of their failure to perform these naturalised norms (Applerouth and Edles 2011:374). This demonstrates that mainstream cultures play a significant role in policing the boundaries of what and who are seen as acceptable, often fencing these boundaries with limits to appropriate 'gender' behaviours.

Traditionally, in DRR, certain characteristics have become naturalised when gender/women is evoked. Research indicates that it is often assumed in disaster terms that women are naturally altruistic, caring and maternal (Bradshaw 2001a; 2001b; 2002; Delaney and Shrader 2000). Indeed, it has been suggested that DRR actors' interest in gender is attributed to the co-benefits of these 'natural' characteristics, such as poverty reduction and channelling aid to children, rather than any meaningful commitment to positive transformation in gender roles and relations (Holzmann and Kozel 2007). In recent years, this agenda seems to have shifted, following extensive critique from the Gender and Disasters community (Bolin et al 1998; Bradshaw 2015; 2013; 2010; 2004; 2002; 2001a; Bradshaw and Fordham 2013; Enarson 2012a; 2002; 1999; 1998a 1998b; 1998c; Enarson and Phillips 2008; Enarson and Fordham 2001a; 2001b; Enarson and Meyreles 2004; Fothergill 2004; 1998; Fothergill and Peek 2004; Fordham 2011; 2004; 1998). This important work has led a change in the focus of many post-disaster actors away from women's innate passivity and victimhood, so that women are being hailed for their (implied) 'natural' resourcefulness and resilience. This is most explicit in the 2012 UNISDR theme, "Step Up: women and girls: the invisible force of resilience (UNISDR 2012b; Singh 2012). However, many of the gender and disaster scholars above have also

problematised this new approach with Bradshaw suggesting that rather than women becoming beneficiaries of aid packages, they have become the facilitators resulting in increased burden of care and responsibilities (Bradshaw 2014). As with Chant's recent critique of the rapid interest in adolescent girls in development (Chant 2016a), the genuineness of this commitment to 'step up' for women and girls is more likely to be linked to the "co-benefits" of inclusion, where responsibilities are increased but meaningful change does not occur.

## Age, Gender and Disaster

*"Your life can change overnight. Or in a moment."*

(Zoe, 2014, American Horror Story, Season 3, Episode 1)

A key change in direction in DRR is the inclusion of "girls" in the rhetoric as demonstrated by the UNISDR theme in 2012 highlighted above and also led by Development literature (Levine, Lloyd, Greene and Grown 2009). There have also been further moves led from Development literature to separate the needs of adolescent girls in disasters and emergencies led by The Coalition of Adolescent Girls (2011). Adolescent girls and Disasters also became the focus of the 2013 'Because I am a Girl' annual campaign theme, further raising their profile as a separate group from adult women and children. This change is important because not only is the international disaster agenda beginning to see past women's victim status but they are also recognising that children and young people are gendered too and that girls are particularly affected in their teenage years as well as having important roles to play. However, in DRR one of the core reasons for promoting the inclusion of girls is based around preconceived notions around adult women as caregivers and service providers to others (Bradshaw 2003; Enarson 2000a; Enarson and Morrow 1998). However, these relationships and roles are complex (Bradshaw 2013). Whilst girls are entering discourse (See Tanner 2010; Plan 2013) this should not automatically be considered as a good thing (Bradshaw 2013).

Whilst new directions in research encourage a perspective to see girls and gender as complex, the restrictions identified around girls' identities, often limit teenage girls through traditional roles, particularly linked to the preconceived notions of gendered altruism. Indeed, 'expanding' the category of girls to include a further category of adolescent girls can also serve to uphold rather than destabilise gender norms and

stereotypes. This is because the term 'adolescent' has strong roots in bioscience and bio-psychology where adolescence is explicitly connected to sexual development and reproduction (Green 2010). Linking girls with adolescence then can bring them closer to reproductive sexuality that is rigidly defined. Doing this would then invisibilise their needs, concerns and interests as well as their desires which may not yet (or ever) coincide with their reproductive roles. Sexual development, when viewed only as a set of criteria to go from child to adolescent, also fails to capture the lived experience of experiencing sexualities for the first time and also reduced sexualities to puberty. Sexualities are much more than biological developments or sexual acts but involve complex emotions around pleasure, desire, pain and distress that in teenage and early adulthood could be more profound and thus more likely to become changed in post-disaster settings that are characterised by their ability to disrupt normal life as well as the way they reveal or exacerbate existing norms and relationships (Ariyabandu 2006; 2009; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009; West 1999; Williams 2002).

Continuing to connect 'adolescent' girls to female roles such as reproduction can increase the chances that adolescent girls are thought of in a caregiving capacity. As Delaney and Shrader (2000) warn over the co-benefits attached to gender responsiveness in DRR work, Tanner's work (2010) on why girls should be included also draws on co-benefits to others as justification for the inclusion of adolescent girls rather than including girls for girls sake and in their own right. Rather than 'empowering' girls, like other gender concerns that are now included in gender responsive DRR and development initiatives (Bradshaw 2014; 2013; Chant; Pearson 2000), it may do very little if at all to positively transform the lives, of girls and young women as individuals because their interests are not the goal (Bradshaw 2013).

Young women face even further invisiblisation because they are neither girl nor adolescent girl, or woman. This is especially so in terms of gendered needs and interests. They are non-normative in a disaster sense because of their lack of children and childcare responsibilities and through not being children themselves. This links to sexuality and how sexuality is very much restricted to the maternal for women and girls. Maternity can be seen to be a biological process, but it is not without cultural input as there are many culturally specific norms attached, such as assumptions around childcare and 'natural' instincts to nurture. Some suggestions are made with reference to sexuality in terms of maternity, health and disease (Akwara et al 2003; Kissinger et al 2007; Petchesky 2008; Pittaway et al 2007) but very little focus exists, especially in non-western senses.

A sexuality-led focus could contribute to removing the invisibility cloak around the important intersections of lifecourse and youth with gender and sexuality. This could then reveal a better understanding of teenage girls and young women and why they do not seem to properly fit the DRR mould unless they are defined by the same characteristics as their adult-women counterparts: caregiving and altruism. Characteristics that do not fit this mould are simply invisibilised. Logically then, where women's, in this case teenage girls and young women, concerns and identities fail to perform the 'correct' femininity associated with caregiving and maternal roles required in order to be visible in DRR, the gendered needs, interests and concerns of women remain hidden.

Chant (2016a) shows how visibility rarely makes things better for critiquing gender roles and relations or creating positive, meaningful change. This thesis seeks to build on this to reveal that 'other' women have 'other' needs, problematising the very notion of visibility. Visibility here is shown to be only ever partial and only revealed where it aligns with what is normative. The same can be said for sexuality and gender. For example, maternal roles and maternal health are reproductive and linked to caregiving and children which are seen as important. Events and processes around maternal sexuality are provisioned for such as delaying early pregnancy in women. However, explorations into why cultural constructions of sexuality is often carved onto the bodies of women, particularly teenage girls is underplayed despite the likelihood of the centrality of sexuality to specific life courses of adolescent girls and young women. This thesis takes a queering gender analysis approach to unpack normativity around young women's experiences post-disaster, showing that what is thought to be 'natural' and normal may not necessarily provide the space young women need to empower themselves.

# PART TWO

# METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

## Chapter 2 - Methodology: Gender, Intersectionality and Feminist Research

*"Life has never been All or Nothing- it's All and Nothing. Forget the binaries."*
(Winterson 2009:127)

### Research question

Does 'Growing Up' After a 'Natural' Disaster Change the Lifecourse Decisions of Young Women and Girls, Particularly Processes Around Gender and Sexuality?

### Aims and Objectives

- To explore whether experiencing a disaster in 'youth' affects the choices young women make in their lives.
- To investigate how genders and sexualities are intersecting factors when 'growing up' after Hurricane Katrina.
- To consider whether and how a disaster changes young women's experiences within intimate relations and decisions.
- To problematise the concept of 'disaster' in order to find out how individual young women actually experience disastrous events.

## Methodology: Introducing transnational and queer feminist research

*"It is learning to 'shift' and 'pivot' while remaining grounded in a latticework of identities and research methodologies that I am proposing as the design for a transversal, feminist trans/methodology for Women's Studies"*

(Pryse 2000:110).

The research is explicitly feminist, specifically informed by queer and transnational feminist theories. Both theoretical perspectives influenced an intersectional approach to feminist research in order to explore identities and social processes in young women's lived realities. In particular, the research is concerned with gender and sexual identities and how these identities are figured when 'growing up' after a 'natural' disaster.

In order to explore these identities without preconceived notions of gender and sexuality, the proposed framework for research is 'queering.' To come to 'queering' as a way of doing feminist research, the methodology first explores feminist-trans/methodology with its focus on telling the stories of the participants from their own perspectives using an intersectional approach to research design, practice and analysis.

To take a feminist trans/methodology perspective to research means a commitment to not only explore social divisions that affect people's lives globally, but also to bring to the fore those divisions that might affect specific groups and divisions that have previously been invisible (Yuval-Davis 2006:206). Trans/methodology combines theory, practice and gender consciousness with profound commitment to activism (Brown 1995; Naples and Desai, 2002). The notion of activism in this thesis is invoked in a non-traditional sense. In this thesis, rather than activism to mean engaging in street marches and protests for example, activism is taken to mean visibilising the spaces young women created post-Katrina that led to self-empowerment and positive transformation through scholarly writing in the form of this thesis and remaining committed to the ethos of feminism.

In this thesis, intersectionality as a process is integral to the research, practice and analysis, as central to producing feminist research that is committed to the overall goal of feminism: to politicise the personal and every-day (Hartsock 1981:36). That is, to produce research that is meaningful to the lives of 'the researched' means to take into account that identities are intersectional and furthermore, that whilst gender is a factor in experience,

there might be many other intersectional identities that lead to their experiences and to their positions within larger power relations (Yuval-Davis 2006:206). Gender is not the 'holy grail' of oppression but is one part of many interconnected, inseparable identities (Crenshaw 1989).

In terms of this research, gender was taken as a starting point based on my own education and research background and training which has been informed by feminist politics, literature and development studies. This led to an internship during my BA study where I worked as a Research Assistant at the Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC) in Colombo, Sri Lanka six months after the Asian Tsunami where I began to work on disaster-related gender concerns and culminated in the focus of my BA dissertation. It was through this experience that I came to be interested in a 'gap' in knowledge within Gender and Disaster scholarship about the experiences of young women and whether they had different or unique experiences compared to what was known about adult women's experiences post-disaster. The onus then, whilst also seeking to explore youth, was on gender as the starting point for investigation.

During my fieldwork for my PhD in New Orleans, it became clear that gender intersected quite explicitly with sexualities. To consider the participants' stories from their own perspectives as I intended, meant that I discovered that gender was not always the most important identity to the young women who took part in the study but rather many focussed more on sexuality. This was mostly due to how I accessed many of the young women who participated in the study as around half participated in or were audience members of 'Drag King' performance shows and the majority of the other half identified as feminist in some way which included considerations of both gender and sexual identities.

**Feminist Trans/methodology**

Transnational feminism was originally proposed by Yuval-Davis in 1997 in an attempt to grapple with the question of 'what kind of voices' feminist research claims to represent. At a time when feminist standpoint theory - the notion that women collectively have a different 'truth/knowledge' claim than men collectively - was being critiqued by Black and Third World feminists for failing to take into account the multiple oppressions of race, class and ethnicity, transnational feminism provided a space to centralise multiple identities and highlight that not all women are oppressed equally as a result. Indeed, the ground-breaking work of Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 was pivotal in this call for change, coining the term intersectionality which provided a way of thinking about and explaining multiple identities, oppressions and processes rather than the popular single-issue

framework traditionally used for claiming rights and visibilities for marginalised identities and processes (Bailey 2009; Crenshaw 1991; 1989; Romero 2015; Wiggins 2000).

The single-issue approach can be said to have a great deal of success in raising awareness on injustice and bringing to the fore the need to challenge inequalities. Key movements using the single-issue paradigm include the Civil Rights Movement, Feminist and Women's Movements and the LGBTQI Movement. However, when one occupies multiple interests in two or more marginalised groups, conflict can arise, around agenda and the degree to which each agenda supports or contradicts the other, as Crenshaw's work illustrates below and therefore highlights a disconnect where people occupy conflicting identities that create unique experiences that cannot be explained by a single-issue approach.

Within the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement, Crenshaw highlighted how it was often impossible for the concerns of Black Women to be adequately addressed by either movement because the Civil Rights Movement was often led by the concerns of Black Men and the Women's Movement in the United States was often led by White Women, much of whom were also often middle-class. Within this different kinds of feminisms also caused conflict and problematized a unified notion of women's issues.

Liberal feminists argued for employment and education with an agenda that was very much working from the inside-out, that is using the "master's tools to dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1984:110-11) with little direct challenge to patriarchal structures or challenges to systems of racism and homophobia alongside sexism similar to the WID model of 'add women and stir.' Marxist feminists argued that class was equally, perhaps at times more important than gender concerns whereas radical feminists argued for deconstruction of oppressive systems with a refusal to work within the patriarchy. Further, lesbian feminists were often marginalised within all of these feminisms because women's concerns were framed through a heterosexual lens (Rich 1983). This created a further lesbian separatist feminism, who like Third World and Black feminists felt that the specific standpoint dominant within western women's movements did not speak to their concerns to such an extent they were positioned as 'non-women' (Ang 2003; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Crenshaw 1991; Hale 2006; Koyama 2006; Moraga and Anzaldua 1983; Rich 2003; 1983; Saldivar-Hull1991)

All of these conflicts draw attention to the contention that arises where we occupy multiple identities and locations as well as how these conflicts can produce conflicting standpoints if the choice of action can only be taken through a single-issue lens. This research is concerned with highlighting that intersectional-issues and identities can be a lens through which to explore gender. By looking at specific groups of young women who

link their own forms of activism and expressions to their sexualities and gender as well as reflecting on these activisms and identities in their youth, intersectionality shows that the multiplicity of identities can be a position of its own.

**Problematic Roots: Feminist Standpoint Theory**

Feminist trans/methodology emerged through transnational feminism which has its roots in feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint was the notion that women's unique standpoint in society provided validation to make 'truth claims' about women's oppression. This truth claim was that women in general have been oppressed by patriarchy (Harding 1993; Hartstock 1983a; 1983b; Smith 1974). Through this truth claim, feminist standpoint sought to justify its challenge to male-dominated knowledge production to produce a different truth (Hartsock 1983a; Harding 1987). The idea heavily influenced Feminist Theory in the early 1980s but mounting critique on the single-issue approach, here claiming that all women could speak from one voice, led to feminist standpoint theory losing prominence throughout the late 1980's and 1990's (Hekman 1997a:341). Rather than abandoning feminist standpoint theory altogether, feminists continued to engage in reflexivity to understand and self-critique in order to better reflect the experiences of women (Aull Davis 19994).

One of the strongest critiques of feminist standpoint theory emerged from Black, Latin American and Third World feminists. Academics questioned the universal 'voice' of Feminist Theory, suggesting that it was a homogenising, white middle class voice that failed to consider the differences amongst women (Alexander and Mohanty 1997; de Alwis 2006; Chakravarti 2008; Coomaraswarmy 2004 Higginbotham, 1992; Jayawardena 1995; King, 1988; Mohanty 1998). Black feminists, Third World feminists and Latin American feminists have been particularly vocal on 'truth claims' regarding what constitutes women's needs, interests and rights as well as what constitutes women themselves.

The notion of a universal category of 'woman' and by extension a universal sisterhood was being challenged. The key issue under critique was universality which assumed a notion of common sisterhood based on sex that transcended all other identities and processes, made popular in the 1960s (Connell 2009a:x). The feminists challenging the notion of global sisterhood not only criticised the reliance on western, white, middle-class women's concerns but also showed that there were many different kinds of women's movements operating across the world (Jayawardena 1982). These women's movements often constituted different ideas about women's needs, interests and rights and even different conceptions of 'woman' (Braidotti 2002:286,288; Jayawardena 1982). This critique

became central to feminist thought to create a 'politics of difference' that would recognise the differences between women and better reflect the heterogeneity of women's experiences (Anzaldua 1999; 1990; Jayawardene 1986; Mohanty 1989; Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015; Saldivar-Hull 1991).

This demonstrates that whilst it is often charged with being a 'white woman's' or 'western' invention, feminism has never been one political ideology or movement. There have and continue to be many different kinds of feminisms with different kinds of theoretical and practical frameworks. Indeed, feminists highlight that homogenising all women as subordinated simply by sex masks various other aspects of identities that privilege some and oppress others (Mohanty 1998). However, despite the self-reflexive critique, the decade of the 1990s also saw the publication of an edited collection entitled 'Sisterhood is Global' (Morgan 1996) demonstrating the pervasiveness of single-issue rights discourse.

The contributions within Morgan's book demonstrate that women across the globe have very different experiences. A more appropriate validation of women's oppression has come to be the fact that women are endless in their variety but have faced and continue to face oppressions that are monotonous in their similarity (Rubin 1975). That is, an intersectional approach to research must be taken so as not to assume that all women are oppressed and equally that even if women in general have been and are oppressed, they are not oppressed in the same way. To engage with Adrienne Rich's definition of heteronormativity (Rich 1983) and translate it to incorporate both gender and sexuality as well as multiple identities and locations, one is not simply a woman but is 'made up' of a matrix of identities, none of which can be compartmentalised (Hill Collins 1990).

To play with Gayle Rubin's phrase, it seems to remain ever-poignant that the oppression of women is endless in its variety, yet monotonous in its similarity (Rubin 1975), there is then a fine line between the diverse identities of women and the monotony of oppressive systems. However, what can be said is that those who are women are likely to suffer disproportionately from an overall dispossession of rights over their bodies and their lives in many different cultures and societies across the world (see for example Gakahu and Lusike Mukhongo 2007; Razavi 2016). However, other cultural and social markers operate simultaneously in relation to difference and must be taken into account as these can increase or decrease gendered vulnerability but also, gender stereotypes can warp our understandings of women's experiences. Further to this, identities are not static so these will change over the life course and are affected by experiences and relationships with others.

Hekman's critique and repositioning of standpoint theory in 1997 provoked lively discussion amongst those authors who had and continue to work with feminist standpoint theories (Hill-Collins 1997; Harding 1997; Hartsock 1997; Hekman 1997a;1997b; Smith 1997). One key thought in Hekman's analysis is the fact that whilst feminist standpoint is theoretically contested, the material reality of women's lives through which the lens of feminist standpoint is based, is not (Hekman 1997:346). This is one of the reasons it is important to develop feminist standpoint theory to better reflect the plurality of material realities of daily lives. What often seems to be agreed is the need to be able to create dialogue across difference in order to achieve the political ends of equality, because gender is the product of certain discourses, gender has real consequences in daily life (Ludvig 2006). Much feminist research re-engages with feminist standpoint and through addressing positionality, the politics of location and thinking reflexively, often situates from the 'latticework' of identities (Pryse 2000) and offered a starting point for feminist trans/methodology.

As Harding's response indicates, at the time of feminist standpoint theory, women's voice was absent in almost every layer of society and public life (Harding 1997). So now, rather than thinking of a universal woman voice, academics and writers questioned what kind of voices and how these can be heard. Rather than clinging to one truth and thus one feminist standpoint, the tradition of reflexivity in feminist methodology led to a dialogue and discussion to broaden the space for 'different' voices. The continued revisiting of the concept has led to a more nuanced development of feminist standpoint theory so that into the twenty-first century, feminist trans/methodology provides a more inclusive and critical space for feminist research (Yuval-Davis 2006; Kaplan and Grewal 2003; Kaplan 1997; Pryse 2000).

Parallels between feminist trans/methodology and feminist standpoint theory can be seen in the commitment to understand the impact of researcher background on the research process and the research participants. Further, the emphasis in feminist trans/methodology to what the "described and imagined" have to say to the "describers and imaginers" (Pryse 2000:116) can also be traced back to feminist standpoint theory. However, where feminist standpoint theory emphasises the identity of the researcher, feminist trans/methodology suggests going a step further in order to understand the political and social realities in which both researcher and researched are situated within to enable us to 'hear' the voices of the researched from their own perspective. This can be achieved through "Rooting, Shifting and rotating" (Pryse 2000; Kaplan and Grewal 2003; Yuval Davis 1997).

Rooting, shifting and rotating are similar to a feminist standpoint that takes into account the politics of location and situated knowledge. Each participant in the dialogue brings with her the rooting in her own membership and identity, but at the same time, she tries to shift in order to put herself in a situation of exchange with women who have a different membership and identity and should not homogenise the other (Yuval Davis 1997:130, 131). It is important to recognise "the different positions from which different groupings view reality" but that it is also always partial (Hill Collins 1990:129). That is, your own 'rooted' identities and the processes that position you within various power relations can align you or alienate you from those you seek to 'research.' However, the premise within rooting, shifting and rotating is that by recognising and becoming conscious of these identities and processes, you are able to transcend them to effectively 'walk a mile in someone else's shoes' to understand 'other' perspectives.

Recognising and being aware of these when you are shifting and rotating means that you acknowledge that no matter how well you shift and rotate to the point of view of 'others,' understanding those 'others' is always partial. Rather than partiality being a negative consequence, Rooting, Shifting and Rotating enables us to understand our limitations at every level from training and planning to fieldwork and analysis, both professionally and personally. Like feminist standpoint theory, not only are your participants 'under the microscope,' the researcher is too. The dualism of the researcher/the researched is therefore broken down. Indeed, a key development of feminist trans/methodology from feminist standpoint theory is the rethinking of dualisms. Trans/methodology research can show how dualisms can be crossed, erased and complicated (see Anzaldua 1999; Basu 2000; Bowleg 2008; Ferree 2008; Freeman 2001; Mohanty 2003; Staehali and Nagar 2002; Valdivia 1995). Like gender and sexualities, power relations are also placed as constructs are therefore, questionable which is useful for this study as the main objective is to explore young women away from the man/woman binary and sexualities from a queer perspective, away from the straight/gay dichotomy.

**The Sociology of Disasters and Methodology**

The sociology of disaster offers some further insight into the considerations of Rooting, Shifting and Rotating by drawing attention to the genealogy of the researcher which informs how the very notion of disaster is defined. The perspective of the researcher informs how, why, where and who the study is about and the overall shape of what the research comes to call a disaster (Britton 2005:117; Buckle 2005:175,199; Cutter 2005:41; Dynes 1998:111; Oliver-Smith 1998:233; Porfiriev 1998:60; Quarantelli 2005:354; Stallings 1998:134). Within the social sciences there are a myriad of theoretical models

and conceptual frameworks to engage with (Quarentelli 2005:354). Indeed, Quarantelli has continued to make suggestions around 'new' and interesting ways to engage disaster research with broader theories, including networking theories, the concept of social capital, ecofeminism and cultural theories (Quarantelli 1998; 2005). Quarantelli suggests we could move towards using our positionalities to clarify our definition and be specific about our methodologies not as a prescriptive guide but as suggestions toward the directions we need to look (Quarantelli 1998:236). In order to develop disaster research in a meaningful way we need to engage with one another and start with a very clear and distinguished acknowledgment of our positionality (Porfiriev 1998:60). It is the approach not the definition that is central to what a disaster is, what a disaster does and how society and individuals act in disaster.

There is much debate over what constitutes the definition of disaster and some of these contentions lay within the methodology taken by the researcher. What may separate disaster definitions then are the intentions and goals of individual researchers that reflects their training and disciplinary and/or organisational background (Cutter 2005:40; Oliver-Smith 1998:233). Indeed, these different positions and purposes also change the kinds of questions we ask when thinking about what a disaster is. For example some study the event itself (and even this can be subjective in terms of what is defined as the event), some look at the processes of disaster causation and others explore the organisational responses to a disaster event (Buckle 2005:175). Positionality is therefore highly significant in defining disaster research.

We must not ignore or avoid defining our approach (Quarantelli 1998:236) and as discussed above, this study made some assumptions before entry into the field based on rootedness in gender and disaster scholarship and earlier conceptions of the study which was to be based in south-west Sri Lanka. However, through my commitment to feminist methodology and intersectionality in particular, the focus on gender became secondary at times to young women's own focus on sexual identities. Because gender and disaster research has emerged as a well-rounded paradigm within disaster research, highlighting key and common issues in the disaster experience as well as highlighting gaps in knowledge, the study also found a place within two relatively unknown processes, youth and sexualities. By also being informed by disaster sociology more broadly, particularly scholarship problematising the very notion of disaster, the research was able to explore how young women themselves define disaster events based on the premise that simply because an event or process might be characterised by others as abnormal, it is not excluded from normal and ordinary social research approaches stemming from social sciences more broadly (Dynes 2005:111).

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a term coined by Crenshaw (1989) to refer to the fact that social positions are relational and thus intrinsically connected, not hierarchically but messily, likened to a busy road intersection where there are many routes crossing over one another. As such, intersectionality as a term is rather complex but it is useful as a catchall phrase that aims to describe the process to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it.

As we have seen above, the theory behind intersectionality is not new in itself and is also linked to feminist standpoint theory and the politics of location. The concept denoted by intersectionality had been employed in feminist work some years prior on how women are simultaneously positioned as women and, for example, as black, working-class, lesbian or colonial subjects (see Brah and Phoenix 2004). Intersectionality is an element that is one part of a more complex ontology where feminist thinkers led to a much broader questioning of the notion of 'truth claims' and universal knowledge in social sciences and beyond (Carbin and Edenheim 2013:3-13; Harding 1997). What Crenshaw's theory did was to provide us with a framework and a name for which to speak of to explain simultaneous positionings. This is a complex task which can lead to a series of issues that must be taken into account in order to think, research and analyse 'intersectionality' in a meaningful and empowering manner. As such, intersectionality developed as a strategy where feminism could move away from approaches that attempt to reduce people to one category at a time and therefore providing a space for the category of 'woman' that inherently takes into account the endless varieties and multiple identities whilst simultaneously providing space for feminist values highlighting the monotonous similarities, not just limited to gender but the matrix of identities and processes that are tied up with gender.

Intersectionality speaks from a subjective position that is relational and fragmented so that identities are continually being formed (Arber 2000; Hall 1997). A key critique on intersectionality centres around the question that if identities are multiple and therefore endless, how can we ever know anything about human experiences, relationships, structures and processes? This is a concern raised by feminist thinkers such as Judith Butler (1990) and indeed can be seen as an echo of the earlier argument made within ecriture feminine specifically by Cixous (1979) in response to the consequences of relativity in feminist work.

Cixous highlights that couples such as man/woman are an oversimplified representation of human experience which in reality is highly complex (1979). Indeed, she takes a rather extreme position that the networks of cultural determinants are "practically unanalysable" because they are "millennial" (Cixous1979: 96). Of course, this is problematic in itself – if human relations are 'unanalysable' then what is the point of research? These relations may be millennial but this does not mean that they should not be considered. Rather, a 'gender continuum' may allow for the scope needed than simply disbanding the concept all together. Rich (1983) began this fete and discussed the notion of compulsory heterosexuality which is invoked through systems of binaries, man/woman; heterosexual/homosexual (1983:25)to highlight how these multiplications described by Cixous (1979:96) can play out to create a 'reality' of 'ideal' women and men. Similarly to Rubin (1975), Rich (1983) problematised 'heteronormativity' but rather than a binary distinction, goes one step further to suggest a 'matrix,' a far more practical solution than hailing gender relations "unanalysable." A matrix is not reductive like binaries and at the same time allows for consideration of 'other' genders. Even where a matrix is discussed in empirical terms, it would always only ever be partial, recognizing that there may be millennial genders but that a partial context allows for a broadening of understanding.

In Butler's critique, relativity is replaced with a concern for feminists trying to look at too many identities but creating an 'exhausted' end point by invoking the 'etc.' at the end of a long, identity marker list (Butler 1990:143). The concern over relativity was that the logical end would be to conclude that there is no women's oppression because there is no solid definition of woman (Cixous 1979; Hekman 1997:350). Butler's concern however was that a growing list of identities was always broken off with an 'etc.' that brushed off those unnamed identities without acknowledgement but at the same time claimed some kind of representation for them by acknowledging there are more than the list hails. Both perspectives lead to the concern that the political aims of feminism at the most basic level to ensure the equality of women is threatened when it cannot be decided whether all concerns belong to all women. Whether the "etc." signifies exhaustion or whether the inherent multiplicity of identity equates to an answer where there is no women's oppression, this presumed failure to account for all and every difference is seen as a weak point in intersectionality (Ludvig 2006:247).

Intersectionality is useful here because by very definition, intersectionality is concerned with identities as multiple. Rather, it is identity politics that leads to the 'exhausted etc.' (Yuval-Davis 2006). Here, intersectionality is a response to the reductionist politics (Yuval-Davis 2006). Yuval-Davis (2006) and Hill Collins (1990) provide a refreshing

perspective on this conundrum through drawing us back to one of the key premises of transfeminism and the politics of difference. Hill-Collins' (1990) perspective adds to this, reminding us that for feminist research to always take gender as the starting point means that all other identities are 'added' in, creating a hierarchy. This means that we can accidentally misinterpret the experiences of others by not allowing them to organise their identities in their own terms. This is where a life history approach to methodology is significant because the emphasis is placed on how participants' construct their own stories and sense of selves, providing the space to see and hear how participants view themselves and their worlds.

Engaging with intersectionality can limit the construction of hierarchical structures of analysis. Rather than focussing on the illimitable 'etc.' (Butler 1993) and therefore unanalysable (Cixous 1979), Yuval-Davis points to the need to separate "the different analytical levels in which social divisions need to be examined . . . the ways different social divisions are constructed by, and intermeshed in, each other in specific historical conditions" (2006:202)That is, in every specific situation and the people within it, some social divisions will be more important than others in relations of power where all of these systems make up some part of an overarching system of domination (Hill-Collins 1990). Furthermore, some social divisions can be relevant to those across locations and apply to most and further still, that identities cannot be viewed externally but rather are part of a creative, constructive process. Taking the above into account avoids treating power as unilateral and absolute where human identities, relations and processes are seen as constructed only by domination and marginalisation, ignoring the fact that humans have agency and also choose identifications (Prins 2006).

There are different ways to acknowledge how intersectionalities are 'chosen.' First, it must be acknowledged that dealing with complexities from an infinite list is impossible and therefore when engaging with intersectional research, one must be explicit of this fact (Ludvig 2006; McCall 2005). From the position of identifying a 'gap' in knowledge, McCall's "intra-categorical approach" to intersectionality is useful (2005:1781). From this perspective, there is an explicit recognition that the social positions for analysis are selected so that it is made clear that a full range of either dimensions of either identity or social categories is not the intended exploration (McCall 2005:1781). That is not to say that simply because this research project intended to look at youth and gender that other identities and social processes would not emerge as significant intersectional identities once fieldwork was underway. Whether there is a gap in knowledge and/or a specific research interest in advance, research can still be led by the fieldwork to further processes, especially when the research recognises and is committed to intersectionality. Indeed,

sexuality became a crucial axis during the fieldwork, as did class and race at times, particularly in the early stages of fieldwork and particularly in relation to the researcher's own identities as will be discussed below. The emergence of different intersections throughout the research processes reflects Ludvig's perspective that the specificity of time and place affect the particularities of gender (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006:190).

A further 'residue' of the single-issue approach can often lead to one process, identity or relation to take precedence in the research. For feminist research, the starting point of analysis is usually gender. Starting from gender though does not necessarily mean that it will always be gender that is significant or most important so with an intersectionality and feminist trans/methodology approach, taking a gender lens actually means ensuring that gender is explored but that many other intersectional identities can be just as important or more important, rather than accidently being treated as secondary to as Bredstrom draws attention to in research on sexual health (Bredstrom 2006). In order to combat an approach which leads to social processes and identities being treated as "merely additional to gender," Bredstrom proposes a queer reading of differences where the categories of analysis, in her case gender *and* sexuality are perceived as unstable and contextualised in order to make impossible any prediscursive identity and the ways in which other identities are constructed through these idioms (2006). Disasters are already constructed within the problematisations of the natural/unnatural; normal/abnormal/normalised in academic discourse as well as gender and sexualities (Butler 1991; Halberstam; Sedgewick; Quarentelli 1998; Yuval-Davis 2006). However, there are many normative ideas within official, legislative and DRR that exclude these considerations even though they are important for understanding the lived experience and realities of disaster (Kreps 1998; Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998). Reading the natural/unnatural/naturalised, the normal/abnormal/normalised through a queer lens, drawing on theories within Queer and Gender theories could demonstrate how not only disasters are viewed but also how genders and sexualities intersect within these normalised discourses.

**Summary**

Contemporary Feminist Theory and research methodology has drawn on its rich history to highlight that women's truths are multiple and complex, further that women do not exist in a vacuum and must be understood in relation to men, boys and girls. As such, fully understanding Gender Analysis is crucial in the study of disaster. Enarson and Morrow (1998) encouraged feminist scholars to engage with disasters using Gender Analysis and Feminist Theory to explore various issues including age, neglected topics through the

exploration of non-dominant methodologies such as oral history (Enarson and Morrow 1998:230).

This thesis also seeks a queer approach to Gender Analysis. Through drawing on the work of feminist foremothers, for example through revisiting Rubin's notion of the sex/gender system, like de Beauvoir's "becoming a woman," Feminist Theory and practice has created research that denaturalise oppressive relations. Within this, not only is gender under the microscope but so is sex. This also helped us to think about masculine and feminine bodies and how these bodies are sexed which created a space for thinkers to critique the very notion of biological sex. Not all bodies have access to a hegemonic gender, even if they are 'born' as the 'right' sex. One's relationship to gender should not be defined by the category of sex because sex is also a cultural construction with histories of its own. In fact, gender and sexuality can be viewed together as gendered-sexualities.

By linking sex/gender to sexuality, Rubin (1979) provided a crucial entry point for queer theory, furthered by Butler who argued whether it is even possible to talk about a distinction between the two (1991). Butler highlighted it simply reproduced the problem by using the same binary terminology and operating in an unequal system. She proposed a continuum instead to recognise the many colours and textures of gender. One of the ways the gender-continuum is discussed is through queering with a focus on the fictions of sex, sexuality and gender. Furthermore, many expressions of gender and sexuality are fabricated, they are not natural and as put by Henrietta Moore (1994) in reality are more like a kaleidoscope than singular, monolithic identities.

# Chapter 3: Methods: Introducing oral histories as a key to unlock stories

## Oral and Life Histories

The core method of data collection was oral/life histories. Historically, oral history sought only to give voice to those who were marginalised (Borger 2010). Since then, the approach has grown as a method in order to gain insight into memory, subjectivity, reflexivity, emotion, feelings and identities allowing for more ambivalent accounts of the past to enter public discourse (Borger 2010; Haynes 2006:5; Stephens 2010). The objective of gaining knowledge is around the meaning and perception of an event or process rather than 'cold hard facts' (Borger 2010; Freund and Quilici 1996). As described by Crook (1998:523), narrative approaches like oral history can reveal the "bedrock reality" of everyday lives. Telling stories about our lives and our experiences is something that nearly all humans do (Haynes 2006:2). We tell these stories to ourselves and recount them to others for many reasons, as a way of connecting to people, bonding or sharing experiences. Through hearing these stories as research, oral histories help us to see the world through the eyes of others and understand the worldviews with which individuals organise their pasts in the present and relationships to others (Borger 2010:10; Haynes 2006:2; Lawler 2000). How participants organise their lives in relation to their relationships is also an important reason why oral histories are the most suitable method because this research seeks to explore intimate relationships and unpack gendered relationships so as to view young women's stories outside the women in isolation vacuum.

Oral history has been undertaken by feminists seeking to reveal retrospective accounts of the women's movement that have been so powerful, these meanings have taken on public and collective significance (Stephens 2010:81). In some feminist circles, oral history has been termed 'phenomenological interviewing' with the key features being akin to oral history as an investigation into lived experience with little prepared questions (Reinharz 1992). There are no specific set rules on the number of probes or open-ended questions thatmight be used as an interview guide only that these should be minimal to allow the participant to tell their stories but at the same time, the oral history space must have a goal of discovery. Here the latter differentiates the oral history from the autobiography (Haynes 2006).

In addition, oral history also allows us to grapple with the relationship between collective and individual memory (Stephens 2010:84; Somers and Gibson 1994) as well as how these memories are positioned within dominant or official discourses of happenings. What is important is to keep the space open for individual memories to come to the fore around growing up and gender and sexualities within growing up, after Katrina. The messiness and partiality of individual stories cannot be reduced to only the collective because meaning can be highly subjective for each individual (Haynes 2006; Hockey and James 2003; Stephens 2010)

In terms of preparation and planning, oral history fieldwork collection can be aligned with unstructured interviews in the sense that both usually require a short list of 'check points' that is updated throughout the fieldwork process but do not have a set checklist that must be addressed for each participant (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody 2001). The central idea is on participant space where the focus is gaining the rich and detailed information needed to create a respectful and meaningful project about how participants see their own histories (Borger 2010:18). Due to the feminist methodology and stance of the research, it was also important for the oral histories to be as reciprocal and as open as possible to allow for a more equal balance between researcher and participant. As such, where participants wanted to ask me personal questions, I would answer honestly and as suggested by Borger, I also went with the flow when participants diverged from the topics, allowing them the space to think about their stories and their lives (Borger 2010:16). That said, there was an element of maintaining the theme of growing up after Hurricane Katrina as a central component during most of the time. For example, Elizabeth and myself engaged in a lengthy discussion about TiVo and the UK equivalent that had no bearing on the research but gave us space to get to know each other alongside the interview itself. In this incidence, it was actually the participant who drew us back to the interview topic. In other cases, it was me as the researcher who drew the interview back to the topic.

Providing space for voices in a world where patriarchal gendered hierarchies exist means that oral histories lend themselves well to a feminist approach. In a classical feminist sense, they reveal women's roots and explore women's experiences (Gluck 1979). Feminist researchers engaging with oral and life histories have also found that women generally have a lot to say about personal life where the opportunity arises (Townsend 1995:55). Whilst participant control is central to oral history, the researcher also needs to open up space for 'difficult' questions within the open space where the participant is telling their story (1995:55). For this research, raising questions or pushing for elaboration on personal life was done on a case-by-case basis, depending on the rapport between the

researcher and participant, in order to allow the participant maximum 'control.' For example, The Lesbian Oral History Group (1989) and Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) followed an interview guide where the participant was first asked to give an outline where she selected the formative and important experiences of her life so far before entering into any preconceived questions demonstrating participant control. This technique was used in this research project. For example, in Phase One, this is how the interviews would begin:

> *"Can you tell me a bit about the things that have happened to you over the last seven years, so that's a bit before Katrina and up until today."*

Notes were then taken and linked broadly to youth and gender. In Phase One, the interviews were closely aligned to unstructured interviews with minimal prepared probes. The focus was on gleaning information about young women's experiences, much of which was unknown at the time of the research. The researcher's aim was to understand what it was like to 'grow up' after Hurricane Katrina through the eyes of the participants and in their own terms. That said, where participants began to talk about personal topics, the interviewer would probe deeper where she felt it was appropriate.

One of the issues of looking for personal experiences is that, as an outsider, it might not be appropriate to ask about such things or participants may not feel comfortable sharing these details with a stranger. In this task to encourage potential participants that the researcher is trustworthy and sensitive and will not misuse or abuse the information gathered, there are different methods to employ. Gaining respect of gatekeepers and establishing a presence in the community before entry are noted as crucial for setting up credibility (Borger 2010:11; Campbell 2006; Salmon 2007; Rashid 2007c). I sent various emails to contacts suggested to me by my Supervisor who knew a professor working at one of the universities in New Orleans as well as making contact with two friends-of-a-friend. The latter was mainly for establishing some social links to help me negotiate my time in a strange city and perhaps find some leads to participants but originally, the idea was to engage with the contacts at the university's women's studies department as a platform to establish the project. As highlighted within the Reflexivity chapter above, Jaz, one of my prior connections through a friends-of-a-friend allowed me access to a group of women who not only wanted to share their experiences of Katrina with me but who also trusted me as a person due to getting to know me or me being vouched for by the friend who could be considered a gatekeeper in the drag/gender performance art scene. This also resulted in a different demographic than originally intended as well as a different

demographic than traditional oral history research that seeks to give voice to those who are marginalised (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf 2000). This is also one of the key goals of feminist research (Edwards 1990). The participants in this research can be seen as both privileged and voiceless. They were privileged as young women who came from lower to upper middle-class backgrounds enabling them access to various kinds of resources post-Katrina that aided their evacuation and recovery. However, they were also voiceless as young women and teenage girls who have yet to have a stake at the table in post disaster research or practice. In this sense, the young women in the sample experienced the powerlessness of voicelessness as a result of the intersection of gender and age, thus they are a group of what Geiger (1985:355) would call "voiceless women." Haynes research also looked at women who were privileged but who were simultaneously hidden due to their experiences as mothers and as accountants, enabling a different voice to emerge to the fore (Haynes 2006:10).

Other contacts were not so successful and gatekeepers viewed me with distrust or suspicion, particularly related to my stranger-status. One concern was that I did not have a history with New Orleans, especially exacerbated when the knowledge was shared that Katrina was not my first 'choice.' Secondly, gatekeepers were concerned that my research would take away time from participants who had already been let down by false promises as well as cause emotional distress due to the nature of discussing the aftermath of Katrina which for many communities in New Orleans was entirely devastating to their lives. In this research, I had a complex relationship with the different gatekeepers of various communities. Where I was trusted and the research project was seen as valuable and that I was credible, I was able to gain access to participants through word of mouth and 'shout outs' at community events such as the drag show. Where I was either not trusted, the project was not seen as valuable or I was not seen as the right person to be doing it, I was refused acceptance and gatekeepers would not help me to meet potential participants. In these incidences, gatekeepers had a negative effect on recruiting participants (Sangera and Suruchi 2008) because they would not even pass on the details of the project and my contact information to allow their communities to decide for themselves whether they would like to learn more and/or be part of the research. Whilst this was frustrating, there was very little that could be done and whilst I felt that my feminist politics and the aims of creating a space for voices to be heard was a worthy goal and that my credentials as an academic were enough to provide me with credibility, it was not necessarily the case in the eyes of some gatekeepers, whose primary goal was to protect their communities and this had to be respected.

The focus on sexuality began to emerge and as discussed in the reflexivity chapter, the fieldwork was divided into two parts and this was partly to do with the change in the direction of research. The research data is thus divided into two parts. In Phase One, where the interviews were more loosely put together and erred more towards unstructured life histories. In Phase Two, more specific questions were added around sexualities and a more complex guide was developed to undertake the life history interviews. The approach continued as oral history but there was also an element of targeted questions on sexualities. Phase Two fieldwork involved both new and existing participants. Prior research indicates that follow-up interviews can allow for deeper insight into participants lives and allow for space to document changes as both parties reflect (Frank 1995:140; Hall Carpenter Archives/Lesbian Oral History Group, 1989:2). This kind of focus allows for multiple stor*ies* to be told and retold by participants. The research was able to accommodate follow-up interviews with half of the original participants from Phase One six months later during Phase Two. This enabled participants to retell their stories in light of their current lives and reflect on changes. The new participants in Phase Two were only interviewed once.

## Field observations

Two types of field notes were taken, critical reflections after each interview (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody 2001) and life history and field notes in the traditional sense as observations from the field intended as evidence to produce meaning about the culture and phenomenon being studied (Schwandt 2015).

### *Critical-Reflection Field Notes*

This thesis was informed by Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) approach to research using a psycho-social approach. The key method taken from their approach was the use of critical reflections after each interview to be used as field notes and to inform the analysis of the interviews. Walkerdine et al. (2001) took extensive field notes describing their own thoughts about and reactions to the interactions that had taken place in the interviews (2001:12). Taking field notes is a central part of Walkerdine et al (2001) three level analysis, where in the third stage, the researcher is positioned as subject to help gain greater insight. Interviewers paid great attention to their own feelings, writing these up immediately after interviews in detailed field notes. (2001:97). Walkerdine et al (2001) suggested taking these notes throughout the interviews and post-interview but for this

research, notes were taken only as post-interview comments. I chose not to take extensive notes during the interviews themselves as they interrupted the flow and reciprocity of the interviews which meant that I felt the rapport would have been damaged. Due to the fact that the interviews were recorded and I can re-listen to them, I do not feel that this choice has been negative. In fact, I have found that re-listening to the interviews has been more helpful as it enabled me to go back in time and relive the stories in a way that a transcript or interview notes cannot do.

Taking these type of critical-reflective fieldnotes particularly informed the reflexive analysis of the methodology undertaken around ethics. For example, after interviewing gatekeepers and finding that most would not assist me in accessing participants, the fieldnotes were later used to unpack the original assumptions of the research around access linked to Britishness, whiteness, privilege and class. These critical-reflective fieldnotes also greatly helped to inform Phase Two of the research project with its much greater focus on sexualities.

***Field Notes (Traditional)***

It is common for qualitative researchers to take notes throughout their fieldwork consisting of descriptive information about what the researcher observes and reflective information such as thoughts, ideas and questions (Emerson 2011; Wolfinger 2002). The field notes are intended as 'data' to be used as evidence in the analysis and writing-up of the thesis (Schwandt 2015). These fieldnotes consisted of descriptive information where I felt situations or conversations provided me with meaning and understanding around my topic (Emerson 2011; Wolfinger 2002).

I had two key objectives when taking traditional fieldnotes. Firstly, I was specifically looking to explain and describe the culture of New Orleans in order to provide an accurate background to the study. With this theme, I tried to be as descriptive as possible as well as note down my insights and thoughts about my observations (Wolfinger 2002). Secondly, I was always alert to adding further depth to my research question itself. In this respect, I only noted information that was specifically relevant to young women growing up after Katrina. This also included inter-generational exchanges I observed and peer-to-peer conversations. Much of the information I gathered through my field notes was through informal discussions and conversations with various people in New Orleans, after seeing something on television whilst in a café or bar, listening to local news on the radio or TV and so on. I also include within the fieldnotes the community meetings I attended. One

unexpected outcome of participant observation through field notes was that during a social encounter with a gatekeeper, I was promised access to a group of young women and this was the only gatekeeper who supported the research and introduced me to other participants for the research through word-of-mouth and 'shout outs' during performance shows.

### *Informal Interviews*

In order to gain an overview of the context in which Katrina unfolded, interviews were sought with gatekeepers, community workers and other professionals through snowballing. During informal social gatherings and meetings I attended, I would talk to people informally and ask if I could take notes, hoping also to be directed toward other people. The number of participants at any one time varied, although usually the informal interviews took place on a one-to-one basis. One included three participants and one included two participants. The ultimate goal was to gain access to life history participants but this rarely happened. The informal interviews were structured similarly to semi-structured interviews. Semi structured interviews are useful in qualitative research to gain understandings about individual experiences but also to gain knowledge about perspectives of a particular set of issues (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Unlike life history interviews, semi-structured interviews followed a specific, but flexible guide through using probes (Roberts 1981:37). Flexibility allows for the research to take emergent issues into account and encourages reciprocity. However, one key challenge was the lack of time participants could offer which resulted in interviews ranging from as short as 10 minutes and up to an hour. However, on average the informal interviews were around 30 minutes. Like a semi-structured style, the informal nature of these interviews enables both the researched and researcher to elaborate in various areas, providing freedom for reciprocity establishing interactive, non-hierarchical relations (Kirsch 1999:25,26).

In this thesis, informal interviews were sought for two reasons. Firstly, in order to gain context and cultural perspectives through third parties who did not identify as young women themselves but wanted to share information and insights. Secondly and in particular, semi-structured interviews were the method chosen in order to engage with local/town gatekeepers such as older, adult women and employees of local women's centres and NGO's, health workers, social workers, teachers, and other key informants in the hope that I might be able to then recruit young women to the life history study.

In terms of interviewing gatekeepers, the objective was also to gain access to potential life history participants as well as to gain information about the cultural and social landscape of New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina. As discussed throughout, most gatekeeper interviews did not allow me to gain access to participants and were very difficult. Power relations due to lack of reciprocity, distrust of me as a researcher for both my competency and suitability for the project hindered these spaces. It is usual for the interviewer to be in a position of power but researchers have also documented that when interviewing people of high status such as older women or professional women, the balance of power can be skewed in favour of the interviewees.

This was certainly the case in at least two of my gatekeeper interviews where during one group interview, it was difficult to take charge and I was treated with some suspicion in order to protect the lives of disaster-affected people in poor areas of New Orleans. On reflection it may be that whilst I may not be the right researcher or perhaps at the time was not the right researcher, this group of women still need to be visibilised.

The second issue arose from an interviewee who began to push sexualised boundaries between herself and myself, alluding to how entering into some kind of encounters with her could help my research project. Luckily, I was in a public place with others who I knew personally so I felt relatively safe but negotiating the encounter was very strange, bringing up interesting issues around researching women and coming in with an assumed common interest of feminism and shared understanding of equality to find that it is not always appropriate or safe to make such assumptions.

The other sixteen semi-structured interviews fared far better. With a gatekeeper of a youth organisation, whilst I was not able to gain direct access to participants, they provided me with many written accounts and experiences of Trans youth as well as the interview itself where rich materials were gained. A further interview also provided me with secondary resources including internal reports and data from a young women's organisation that supported various projects following Katrina. This participant also took part in Phase Two of the life histories.

Two telephone interviews also took place where outer boroughs outside the boundaries of New Orleans were discussed. It was hoped that both of these interviews would transpire into organised focus groups with young women from the towns but the gatekeepers were unable or unwilling when it came to finalising the focus groups but the information gleaned about other boroughs was also useful.

I was also able to talk to people who worked in different kinds of community work. These participants included three lawyers (one of whom also participated in the life history interviews), one FEMA employee, one housing officer and one teacher. All were young women themselves but did not identify as young women who would be suitable for the life history research. Instead they preferred to share their experiences informally as community workers and did not feel comfortable undertaking a recorded interview because of how they felt as though they were not able to 'speak' about others or that their insights were not valuable. Of course this was not at all the case, but I wanted to respect their desire to keep things informal.

## Why 'Them'? Choosing Research Participants with Sampling and Recruitment

The research participants in this thesis were both purposely chosen and accidentally 'happened' upon. The original study was set to take place in a different country and different region of Sri Lanka in South Asia (the journey of the study will be discussed further reflexively below). When this proved impossible, it became about New Orleans, North America. However, the characteristics of the original participants continued to be the desired characteristics in New Orleans as Sri Lanka. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, the research was informed by the researcher background in Development Studies and feminist research in this area that often seeks to visibilise the most vulnerable of populations and so participants were sought from underprivileged communities and backgrounds. Secondly, the research was informed by existing feminist literature on Hurricane Katrina that indicated women of low or working class and ethnic minority identities were disproportionately affected by Katrina (Laska and Morrow 2006; Litt, Skinner and Robinson 2012; Logan 2006; Teirney 2012; Troutt 2006) and furthermore, that young black women may have been impacted even further in terms of their futures (Willinger with Gerson 2008).

Due to the lack of contacts in New Orleans, it became increasingly difficult to access participants from the above backgrounds and even where gatekeepers were approached, access still remained a problem. This brought up some interesting issues around ethics, whiteness, Britishness and privilege which will be discussed in detail below but whilst this was fascinating, there were still no research participants. Around the same point in time, the 'friendship group' I had developed began to talk informally about their Katrina

experiences and it became apparent that Katrina had affected everyone in the New Orleans community even those who were living out of state at the time as well as those who had only just arrived in New Orleans for college only to be turned around and evacuated days later to various middle class young women and teenage girls who lived in New Orleans at the time. Whilst their class may have provided some protection, their stories were still worth telling and this also intersected with other identities, specifically around gender and sexuality where many participants identified as 'queer' in some way or another and/or feminist. From here on, the demographic became young women who grew up after Katrina who happened to be middle (lower-upper) class, often either queer and/or feminist, nearly all of whom who had experiences around rethinking gender and sexual identities.

***Cohort Generation***

Broadly speaking, the research identified a cohort generation which required specific characteristics to take part in the research. A group of people born in a specific span of years who are considered distinct from those who precede or come after them are called a 'cohort generation.' This can be determined by historical events or experiences that affect individuals born during that period more directly than others alive in the society. This leads people of different ages to experience the same social and cultural events differently (Miller 2000:30). The cohort generation for this thesis was identified as young women and teenage girls who 'grew up' after Hurricane Katrina. Within the cohort generation, commonalities around "collective memories" are particularly expected for the research (Miller 2000:33). However, due to what Miller (2000) terms "structural variables" (Miller 2000:34), divisions within the cohort were to be expected. In this research rather than structural variables and divisions, identities are seen as intersectional (i.e. the interrelations between class, sexuality, gender, race, ethnic group etc.) and formed a part of the analysis of how young women grow up after a natural disaster. The sample subcohort is discussed below.

***Sample***

The 'sample' is of a sub-cohort of Katrina survivors, broadly termed 'young women and teenage girls' who grew up after Katrina. The women who participated were aged from late-teens up until their early thirties at the time of the disaster, roughly between 13-30 (now 22-40). The definition of 'young women' remained fluid and approximate as the focus is placed on the stage of their life course which meant that where appropriate, women in their thirties could participate. An example of this is where a woman identified herself as a 'young woman' at the time and also this coincided with other characteristics

such as not being married or having children and not seeing themselves as having fully adult women concerns as their mothers may have had.

The lifecourse approach was chosen because chronological age refers to the sequence of social rules and/or life stages that an individual goes through during their life: the life course (Miller 2000:27). For example, if a woman identified herself as a young woman at the time of Katrina, participation was encouraged. The research also sought to explore the stories of 'non-normative' women such as lesbian women, sex workers, trans women and women without children i.e. women who were not targeted as 'caregivers' but are seen as 'non-normative.' The sample was therefore flexible which allowed for greater scope in the study. Many of the participants identified as queer in some way and within this, some identified as Trans. None of the participants had children at the time of Katrina. Whilst no sex workers participated in the life history research, gatekeepers from the queer community talked at length in semi-structured interviews about sex work, queer identities in the post-Katrina context.

In terms of the life histories, sixteen women participated in the life history stage resulting in 20 life histories that took place in two different stages. Some of the participants took part in both stages whereas others took part in one or the other. This will be discussed in detail below.

***Recruitment***

I met the participants through various channels. Some of the participants were recruited through a gender performance group and the others were recruited through an online women's group via an acquaintance. The contact at the gender performance group also participated in the study. I met her through a friend in the UK. My landlady with whom I was put in touch via my Director of Studies' contacts who lived in New Orleans, also helped me make contacts which were useful for semi-structured interviews with others. Further participants were recruited through word of mouth by participants who had already been interviewed and shared their experiences with others who they felt would benefit from taking part. Indeed, all who took part in this way from word of mouth had all heard that taking part was a positive experience. All of the participants were asked for consent and asked if their interviews could be recorded using the Dictaphone app on my personal Smart Phone.

All of the participants agreed to both and were made aware that they could terminate their participation at any time. At the beginning of the research process, participants did not feel comfortable signing paper copies of consent, feeling that their identities could be more

easily revealed or a little distrusting in what could happen to their personal information despite my reassurances. It was actually already expected that participants would not want to sign paper copies of consent from the original study location of Sri Lanka where the researcher had previous experience of distrust in paper copies and the back-up plan to obtain verbal consent after the research process was explained and a space for questions was provided proved the best method of obtaining consent. Verbal consent was recorded on the Dictaphone. I continue to be in touch with all of the participants who took part in the life history interviews with all having direct access to my up-to-date contact information providing opportunity to withdraw at any time and to keep in touch with the research process if they so choose. However, usually participants who do keep in touch do so due to the friendships that have emerged whilst most others keep in touch from a distance via social media (for example 'liking' posts on Facebook).

***Demographics***

Forty interviews took place including life histories with young women, informal interviews and informal meetings with 'experts' and gatekeepers as well as field notes and reflections. The participants' ages ranged between 13 and 35 at the time of Katrina in 2005.

Most participants are of varying middle-class backgrounds. Three life history participants are African American, one is Hispanic, one of Cajun descent and the remaining eleven are White. Two participants did not live in New Orleans at the time of Katrina but in neighbourhood countryside. A further three participants lived in the outer suburbs of the New Orleans. Two participants were living completely 'out of state' at the time of Katrina and returned afterwards as a result of Katrina. The remainder of the participants lived in New Orleans. Four of these participants had moved to New Orleans for college prior to Katrina and have remained there ever since.

***Life history participants***

There were 16 life history participants but 4 participated in both stages meaning that there are 20 'sets' of life histories (see table one: demographics of life history participants). All participants come from a lower to upper middle class background. No one defined themselves as being poor. The most affluent participant was African American. One participant was of Cajun descent, one was Hispanic, she was born here but her parents were born in Latin America. One participant identified as Jewish. Four participants were African American. The rest of the participants were White. Five participants were not

originally from New Orleans. Two participants were not living in New Orleans at the time of Katrina but returned afterwards. Two participants lived in the countryside of New Orleans and not in the city itself. The rest of the participants lived in New Orleans city and suburbs. The participants were aged 13 – 35 at the time of Hurricane Katrina. Two participants moved to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and thus discussed their experiences of Hurricane Isaac and as they were both from disaster-prone areas of the United States originally, also talked about their experiences of other storms, tornados and hurricanes. Four participants took part in both Phase One and Phase Two of the fieldwork.

***Informal Interviews and Meetings***

Twenty participants took part in the semi-structured interviews. These participants varied in age and it was not asked as a question and was not relevant to their participation. Their perspectives were sought in order to gain other perspectives of New Orleans. Many were not from New Orleans and did not define themselves as being part of the target group, often due to age. Some moved here after Hurricane Katrina and were involved in social and charity work that related to Katrina Survivors.

## Storying the Stories: Analysis

As this research is a qualitative enquiry, the analysis chosen is reflective of this and has engaged with thematic analysis looking not only for themes but for patterns and insights into understaffing of the phenomena, viewing these findings as the fruit of qualitative research (Patton 2005). The goal of thematic analysis is to bring experiences together that alone would lack meaning (Leininger 1985:60).

The life history interviews form the basis of the findings chapter alongside my field notes and the informal interviews with gatekeepers and key informants where applicable. The reason the fieldwork is organised hierarchically is because the research question is focussed on stories and life histories to explore 'growing up' for young women after Katrina. The key informant/gatekeeper semi-structured interviews are mainly used to demonstrate the cultural and social contexts of New Orleans, subcultures in New Orleans such as queer and youth cultures.

Oral histories can provide particularly rich information due to the "messy" nature of recollection and memory (Daniel James 2000:64) providing contradictory and complementary accounts of lives lived, experiences gained as participants simultaneously

make sense of themselves and their experiences (Stephens 2010:82). It is the job undertaken in analysis to pay sensitive attention to the 'discomposure' of life stories, paying attention not just to what is said but what the memories mean and what is never spoken (Stephens 2010:83).

McCormack's (2004) process of 'storying' the story was also used to organise the life histories. This enabled the themes to be more explicit and organised the stories in a more methodical way adding flow to the written piece. However, due to the very nature of oral history's messiness, the storying approach takes into account that there is likely to always be an element of discomposure within life narratives (Summerfield 2004) and as such, sought to draw out and reveal the discomposure produced.

The aim of the research was to address the research question: to explore what it was like for young women growing up post-Katrina particularly with reference to gender and sexuality identities. Within this, more specific questions sought to explore the aims and objectives to achieve the research question.

The interviews were first transcribed and studied for themes and anomalies via meanings, feelings and experiences (Taylor and Bogdan 1989:131). To do this, I used coloured pens, memo stickers and a notebook to record themes, anomalies and ideas, particularly useful for cross-referencing across the interviews. On the first level analysis, I looked to address the aims and objective of the study and so I looked specifically at recurring meanings, feelings and sayings or mantras around the aims and objectives to find out:

- Whether young women felt they had made different choices or Katrina-specific choices about their lives.
- Whether gender intersected with sexuality when growing up and whether experiencing Katrina made these processes different
- Whether young women talked about Katrina as changing the way they think about and enter into intimate relationships and the decisions they make around intimate relationships
- How young women think about 'disaster' to find out how individual young women actually experience disastrous events and what events within the disaster are the most disastrous

The themes were then grouped together and quotes from the interviews were organised under each. Subthemes were then developed as well as quotes that fit within multiple

themes. Further themes were developed and explored or kept separately for future research where they did not contribute meaning to this research project explicitly. In terms of transcribing and future analysis, following Spivak (1992) it is important to write and research 'against the grain' of hegemonic representations of subaltern groups. Spivak tells us to deconstruct them and rescue the cultural difference and identities of subaltern groups by showing how difference is produced and reproduced (Frenk 1995:139). I have tried to do this through engaging with theoretical concepts in a new and imaginative way, particularly through engaging with the interviews aurally when I revisit the transcripts or thematic analysis document. Doing this allowed me to fully listen to the words and feelings that were expressed during the interviews themselves and recapture the context of what the participants were saying. This also helped me to make the decision to 'tidy up' the quotes so that they did not jar against the formal tone of the thesis but still ensure their voices and stories came through clearly. 'Tidying up' the words of participants is never an easy decision and has been discussed by feminist researchers engaging with qualitative research (Kirsche1999; Maynard 2013). Ultimately, it is the desire to maintain a more equal voice so that the participants 'real life expression' does not 'jar' against formal academic text and lessen the impact and importance of their words.

Anomalies were noted and explored in relation to the subjectivity focus of the research, particularly recognising the messiness of life history recollection (Daniel James 2000).

### *Thematic Analysis and the Anomalies Within*

Many young women in the life history interviews talked about some kind of positive transformation as a result of Hurricane Katrina. However, their journeys could sometimes differ but this does not mean they are not experiences worth noting and many could be seen as processes and experiences in need of further research. For example, Elizabeth was a drug addict and battled with addiction as part of her Katrina transformation whereas many of the other young women whilst struggling with sexuality in the same vein as Elizabeth, their struggles were mostly concerned with family and friends potential reactions to their sexuality.

# PART THREE

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Chapter 5: Disasters as Queer

### Introduction: Disasters and Gendered-Sexualities in relation to Youth and Lifecourse

Within disaster research, age, particularly youth, is relatively unexplored. However, important gender and disaster work has drawn a link between age and disaster, finding that these elements of identities create unique post disaster experiences (Ollenburger and Tobin 1998:106). Furthermore, multiple identities have been increasingly acknowledged by disaster scholars as factors that can increase capacities and vulnerabilities after a disaster (Blaikie, Canon, Davis and Wisner 1994; Bradshaw and Fordham 2014; David 2012; Enarson 2012a; 2012b; Fothergill, Maestas and Darlington 1999; Hartman and Squires 2006; Horton 2012). Within this literature, the Haiti Earthquake and Hurricane Katrina were catalysts in producing scholarship on these intersections, particularly introducing a focus on race, class and poverty in relation to gender (David 2012; Enarson 2012a; 2012b; Horton 2012). Taking a specific intersectionalities approach could make the importance of multiple identities more explicitly focused. Further to this, youth as a category of analysis has been a longstanding interest within the social sciences, from early ethnographic studies within anthropology such as those of Margaret Mead (1931) exploring the transitions from youth into adulthood to the sociological enquiries of Elder (1975; 1980) into why social change occurs across generations. However, it has been noted that there has been a limited amount of research that examined age as a social dynamic, including taking youth voices into account (West 1999). As a result, contemporary youth studies explores young people in their own terms (McCormack 2012; McCormack and Anderson 2010; Zhang 2000), producing invaluable research

demonstrating the heterogeneity of youth as a category as well as highlighting that youth is a significant identity in the lifecourse.

Youth then can be seen as a noteworthy process and a specific identity which suggests that experiencing a disaster in youth is likely to result in post-disaster experiences that are different from adults but very little research exists to evidence this. What has emerged demonstrates that younger people might be better able to cope with disaster than adults (Ollenburger 1992). However, considering disasters disrupt the lives of everyone, whilst young people might be more adaptable, their lifecourse paths are likely to change as a result but because young people are positioned differently to adults and children, the outcome will likely be different. For education systems are a key process in the lives of young people (Green 2010). However, educational institutions are known to be affected by disaster and simultaneously are also priority for governments and agencies to re-establish quickly (Weems and Overstreet 2009). Whilst there is research about the education needs of children post-disaster, post-16-18 years old receive little to no attention. Furthermore, there is a lack of temporal perspective so that there is limited knowledge about the effects of a disaster on young adults 'growing up' as they progress through their education over time.

One of the reasons for not studying the area of lifecourse might be that 'growing up' is very difficult to define and within the research about young people's lifecourse, there is a lack of definition about what is meant by 'growing up.' However, key features of change and processes can be identified. Often these features centre around "coming of age" rituals, such as having your first intimate relationship, going away to college or moving in together with a partner (Green 2010). However, these rituals are also context specific and can vary across culture, subculture, collective and individual background. Depending on the context, some processes are seen to be relatively traditional. These 'traditional' lifecourse experiences can already be distressing and confusing as well as ambivalent (Green 2010). Gender and sexual identities as processes of discovery are 'known' to cause a complex combination of distress and pleasure, confusion and self-discovery, which can be particularly exacerbated for young people who want to explore queer identity or non-normative identities (Almeida et al 2009; Augelli and Grossman 2006; Daley et al 2008; Eisenberg and Resnick 2006; Hatzenbuehler 2011; McIlwaine and Datta 2004; West 1999; Williams 2002). Furthermore, a study post-Katrina suggested that queer youth may have increased vulnerabilities due to existing concerns about 'coming out' (O'Pry 2012).

Change is complex – known and unknown, positive and negative – often involving decisions and choices, which are not only made by young people but also enforced by individuals, institutions and society (Coles 1994; Green 2010; Williams 2002). Research

also indicates that mass or rapid social change can have a significant impact on growing up (Condon 1990; Furlong, Woodman and Wyn 2011; Furlong and Cartmel 2006). However, very little academic research explores disasters in the context of mass social change and youth experiences even though disaster could be seen to be a type of 'rapid' or 'mass' shift. To experience ordinary 'growing up' processes following a 'natural' disaster like Hurricane Katrina may amplify, mutate or even erase traditional lifecourse experiences. However, little is known about how a disaster can change the lifecourse decisions of young people after a disaster.

Disasters are thought to bring about opportunities for social change, particularly gender relations through the post-disaster window of opportunity (Bradshaw 2013:101; Byrne with Baden 1995; Delaney and Shrader 2000:31-34; Thurairajah, Amaratunga and Haigh 2008). At the same time disasters are also seen to be disruptive to social life through the failure and collapse of social and cultural institutions (Dombrowsky 1998; Kreps 1998; Alexander 1997; 1993; Kroll-Smith and Couch 1990; Foster 1990; Quarantelli 2005:343 Stallings 1998:129). Within this literature, many of the scholars discussing the window of opportunity also note their scepticism on the level to which it plays out in reality. Gender is one process that is suggested as a structure for positive transformation in the post-disaster window of opportunity (Byrne and Baden 1995). Growing up after a disaster may produce different lifecourse trajectories as disasters are also seen as 'amplifiers' to existing unequal power relations (Enarson 1998).

Processes of gender and sexuality are experienced during the lifecourse, often for the first time during teenage and young adulthood times (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody 2001; West 1999; Williams 2002). For example, negotiating relationships in terms of friendships, intimate decisions and forming a gendered identity related to femininity and masculinity. Feminist media research in particular has documented the impact of cultural and societal norms in shaping young women's sense of gender and sexual identities (McRobbie 1994; 2007). These various discourses on 'femininity' operate at many levels; wider cultural frameworks, subcultures, community levels, familial and peer levels as well as individual identity. Class in particular is noted to play a part in the lifecourse decisions of young women (Walkerdine et al 2001; Williams 2002). As young women grow up, they have increasing independence about the decisions they make but these choices take place in relation to their cultural, community and family trajectories. However, because little research exists we do not know whether growing up after a disaster can make these changes and decisions harder or whether young women define the results of the disaster differently from adults and children.

What we do know is that the processes of gender and sexuality are key journeys in the lifecourse and can be particularly poignant in 'youth' (Williams 2002). Young women are thought to face specific negotiations around growing up and becoming 'proper' women through establishing feminine identities (McRobbie 1994). Within this, there are important sexuality elements (Williams 2002:46; Rashid 2008; 2007a; 2007b; 2007c). Specifically, research on queer sexualities and youth suggests that their growing up experiences can be even more challenging and complex than heterosexual youth (Usser and Mooney-Somers 2000). There is also some level of personal struggle associated with queer sexuality in youth with research suggesting that feeling that their sexualities and/or gender identities are non-normative can be traumatic for young people growing up (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar and Azrael 2009; Daley, Solomon, Newman and Mishna 2008; Espelage and Swearer 2008; McDermott, Roen and Scourfield 2008). From cultural studies, sociological standpoints and subjective perspective, feminist scholars have explored how young women and teenage girls negotiate growing up processes (Giddings and Horvorka 2010; McIlwaine and Datta 2004; McRobbie 1993; Rydstrøm 2006; Switzer 2013; Tolman 2009) all of which demonstrates that youth is a specific identity for women growing up which means that disasters, because of how they alter normal life by their "un-ness" are likely to also change how young women grow up, especially in conjunction with gender and sexualities which are often already important or developing identities.

## Youth, Lifecourse and 'Growing Up'

At the end of the 1990's, there was a limited amount of systematic research that examined age as a social dynamic (West 1999). However, there has been a steady change, which has led to a greater awareness of the experiences of young people (McIllwaine and Datta 2004). Young people are often assumed to occupy a transitional period that is closer to adulthood than childhood but where they are gradually socialised to assume their adult roles which requires guidance and support (Cohen et al., 2003; Speier 2000). However, youth transitions have been criticized for not addressing the complexities of youth identities (McDonald et.al. 2001). So whilst transition may be one aspect of 'growing up' research on youth – particularly anthropology - often over-emphasised adolescence as a staging ground for adulthood (Bucholtz 2002; Williams 2002). From this perspective, youth should not be constructed in opposition to adulthood but rather should be seen as partial, inconsistent and contradictory through processes of familiarisation (youth as dependents) and individualisation (youth as having rights) (Valentine 2000). Youth identities may include social and cultural rituals of 'coming of age' but these 'transitional' rituals are not static. Rather they can disappear and alter, and some cultural shifts

disproportionately affect the lives of young people (Bucholtz 2002:829). However, little is known of the consequences of such cultural and social shifts on young people post disaster.

A core issue with youth research was identified as the fact that many 'youth issues,' were framed within adult concerns which results in misrepresentation (Bucholtz 2002:525-534; McIllwaine and Datta 2004; Raby 2007:42). This can be seen in more recent studies and cultural texts such as the continued concern placed on risky teenage sexualities resulting in teen pregnancy (Kost and Henshaw 2014; '16 and Pregnant' – TV Series). Indeed, popular and societal views around youth have been filtered through a negative lens. For example, research showed that there has been over-emphasis on moral panic and youth as social violators rather than agentive inventors in ongoing sociocultural change (Bucholtz 2002:535; West 1999:530). Media often express concerns about unruly youth behaviour such as teenage pregnancies and STIs, the UK riots, and the looting post-Katrina. Global reluctance to confer youth the same sexual rights as adults can possibly be attributed to these negative perceptions of uncontrolled desire among youth (McIllwaine and Datta 2004:486). However, research highlights that youth are cultural actors whose experiences are best understood from their own point of view (Best 2007:10; Bucholtz 2002:533; Raby 2007:38). Indeed, sociological research has demonstrated that youth have their own specific cultures or subcultures (Brake 2013; Bennet 1999; Epstein 1998; McRobbie 1993).

Young people have their own specific needs, interests and desires that set them apart from children and adults. This is most evident within popular media, such as literature and TV shows that are shelved as a particular 'young adult' style of genre (See Amazon Prime listings of TV and film genres). Magazines and popular genre fiction have been long-serving youth-texts, particularly for young women (McRobbie 1994). Within literary circles, particularly popular genre fiction, teenage girls and young women are recognised as having different reading interests or at the very least, marketing signposts both groups to suggest specific reading choices, such as 'chick lit' and within this, young adult romance such as the Twilight Saga and other similar texts.

The young adult as a category has emerged within Development literature and practice as well as within disasters more recently. Since the 2010's, disaster discourse has begun to recognise a 'new' category of women's lifecourse as 'the adolescent girl (Tanner 2010; Plan 2013). However, as adolescence is rooted in psychological, medical and biological approaches (Green 2010) girls are automatically linked to reproductive and maternal roles. Furthermore, adolescence as a life stage may not capture how young women see themselves and does not address 'non-adolescent' youth such as young women under 30 years old but no longer teenagers. As globalization has extended the stage of youth

(McIllwaine and Datta 2004; Zhang 2000), young women may prefer to relate closer to 'youth' than maturity.

Just as the emergence of the 'adolescent girl' demonstrates, psychological perspectives and the key ideas from this school of thought continue to shape current thinking on young people and in turn play a part in the sociology of age (France 2007). Much of this thinking can be traced back to an early study by Hall in 1904 about misbehaving boys, which popularised the notion of adolescence as a troubled time despite being largely unsubstantiated, it became a popular interpretation of adolescence (Green 2010:90-91). Additionally, psychological perspectives on 'growing up' tend to rely on clearly demarcated developmental stages linked to biology ignoring more subjective accounts of experiencing the lifecourse, but are quite pervasive culturally (Janssen 2009:541-542). For example, the biological occurrence of when a girl experiences her first period is tied to all kinds of different cultural identities around 'becoming a woman' (De Troyar 2003; Jewitt and Ryley 2014; Lahiri-Dutt 2015; Wasserfall 2015).

As such, adolescent/ce is a term generally avoided by sociologists precisely because of its bio-psychological history, preferring the term 'youth' (Green 2010:104). Whilst a sociological approach allows for a more subjective and nuanced understanding of the lifecourse and young people's experience, it is important not to rely solely on social processes. The realities of cultural change are rarely studied by sociologists in lifecourse research (Janssen 2009:544) and it is important to look at cultural change too, particularly where young people are 'reinventing' spaces (Lee and Zhou 2004; Mason 2009; McRobbie 1993). Such spaces also include drag king scenes where sexualities and gender identities can be explored, visibilised, reinvented and celebrated and created (Surkan 2003). Drag king scenes, whilst not exclusive to youth do include a youth element and involve a complex mix of performance, gender role play and rewriting gendered stereotypes including female masculinities and 'ultra' feminine roles that can allow for space for young women to explore their identities. Indeed, research on young women exploring heterosexual gender identities suggests that gender is viewed by young women as a "trying on" process that shapes adult identities (Williams 2002).

## Youth, Growing Up and Lifecourse

Youth research is a growing and interdisciplinary field. From the early ethnographic studies such as Mead (1930) to explorations of gender and class growing up as girl in the late-twentieth/early twenty-first century such as Walkerdine et al (2001), the processes of growing up have been discussed at length. 'Growing up' is implicitly identified as a key

process in lifecourse research through oral history due to notions around understanding why social changes occur across generations (See Elder 1974; Sarris 1978). Growing up, lifecourse and change can thus be seen as interrelated.

There is now a greater awareness of the experiences of young people (McIllwaine and Datta 2004:483). Growing up is one part of lifecourse; not one single event but a set of subjective and fluid processes. Lifecourse also inherently implies change over time, even in the most basic respect of getting older (Green 2010). Indeed, early focus in the field of life history explorations of lifecourse was highly focussed on the changes that aging brings (Elder 1980**;** Giele and Zollinger 1983). Research by Coles (1995) identified three general transitions that most young people go through as they grow up: full-time education to full-time work; family of origin to family of destination; and family home to independent living (Craine and Coles 1995).

Whilst there appears to be a proliferation of research about "growing up," particularly from a psychological perspective (Baizerman 2000; Stevens, Hunter, Pendergast, Carrington, Bahr, Kapitzke, & Mitchell 2007; Tilton-Weaver, Vitunski, & Galambos 2001) there is little agreement over what is meant by the term. Rather, "growing up" appears to be context-specific and involves different processes depending on the participants' collective and individual trajectories (See Hill-Collins 1997). That said, an overarching theme of change in some way is seen to be a key process in growing up even though these changes are subjective and contextual (See Donaldson 1984; Hill-Collins 1997; Waylan and Wolke 2004). Change as a defining feature of growing up is very much in-keeping with the early research on adolescents (Mead 1930). So whilst youth identities may include social and cultural rituals of 'coming of age' (Bucholtz 2002:829) as the research highlighted above indicates, 'transitional' rituals are not static and are informed by individual, family, cultural and subcultural practices (See Hill-Collins 1997; Walkerdine et al 2001; Williams 2002). However, up until the 1990's, there was a limited amount of systematic research that examined age as a social dynamic (Green 2010:24; West 1999:526). This may be because early research was not focussed on youth rights and agency but rather wanted to understand historical processes of massive social change in relation to aging rather than youth, thereby invisibilising youth as cultural actors with cultures of their own (Giele 1998). This means that little is known of the consequences of such cultural and social shifts on the lives of young people.

The research that does exist suggests that adolescence as a stage in lifecourse can be 'missed', altered or disappeared extended or emergent as a result of circumstances, constraints and shifts such as rapid economic and cultural shifts, media and consumption shifts (Bucholtz 2002:829; Condon 1990). Disasters, whilst they reveal and amplify

existing social structures, may also give rise to the kinds of shifts the research above highlights, however, very little disaster-specific research exists on youth to show us whether this is the case or not. Fordham and Ketteridge (1998) point to disaster events speeding up processes of personal and social change that likely would have happened without the disaster event, but would have happened gradually as well as triggering unexpected consequences (1998:91). This could be partially attributed to young people's stage in lifecourse where they "have not fully developed the psychological, social and economic coping skills of adults" (Rashid and Michaud 2000:55). It is likely then, that the experiences of 'growing up' may change in the wake of a disaster.

## Contextualising Young Women: Youth, Gender and Sexualities

Youth, like other identities, is not experienced in a vacuum and as such, the experience of youth as growing up will differ depending on other axes of identities, such as gender and sexualities. A substantial body of work on gender and sexualities already exists (Binnie 2004; Burton 2005; Butler 1999; Grewal and Kaplan 2001; Hennessy 2000; McClintock 1995). Within this there are important youth dimensions (McIllwaine and Datta 2004:489; Raey 2001). Further still, there is a small body of work on youth and same sex desire (Herdt 1989; Jackson and Gilbertson 2009; Leap 1999; Wilkinson and Pearson 2009; Ussher and Mooney-Sommers 2000).

Discovering sexualities is known to contribute to anxiety in young people which affects their mental health, particularly queer sexualities (O'Pry 2012; Ryan, Russel, Huebner, Diaz and Sanchez 2010). Furthermore, sexuality is tied up with gender, which also alters the experiences of discovering sexualities that might not be widely accepted, seen as deviant or may be seen as non-normative (Williams 2002). This can be particularly relevant to teenage girls and young women when exploring and discovering sexualities (both queer and straight) due to gender norms (Raey 2001). For example, in 'western' culture, feminist media research has drawn attention to gendered discourses of power inscribed onto the bodies of young women and girls which may exacerbate concerns over body image and sexual attractiveness, particularly for heterosexual women (Bordo 1999; 1993; Coward 1994; Covino 2004; Gill 2007; Tasker and Negra 2007).[1] Growing up as a

[1] It has been identified by a number of scholars as 'postfeminism.' Postfeminist culture does not mean that gender discrimination has come to end, but rather refers to an active process by which feminist gains are undermined suggesting that goals of feminism have either been achieved or are old-fashioned and redundant (McRobbie 2007:27). Within this discourse, freedom and equality are undisputed commitments and this operated through processes and language around 'choice' where to perform correctly, one must make the right choices. The

heterosexual young woman creates different anxieties due to conflicting cultural messages through media and other institutions of conformity and regulation through feminine regimes that might also be stressful and painful (Bordo 1999; Bartky 1990:43; Covino 2004; Hollows 2000; McRobbie 2007; Roberts 2007:233,235). Young women are already negotiating complex processes, involving decisions around sexuality, femininity and gender that they will then continue to negotiate through their lifecourse as they grow up. The female body is central to this normative feminine identity, it is an abject one, defective, suffering and diseased and in need of proper management and control (Bartky 1990:43; Covino 2004). That is, left to its own devices, the feminine body would fail and so it must be a lifelong commitment and project. Research suggests that teenage girls and young women create idealised versions of femininity, particularly through visual culture that requires the policing of what is "sexy" (Ringrose 2010).

This project of femininity normalises particular female bodies and stereotypical 'feminine' behaviours through a language of personal choice (McRobbie 2007:38). That is, to be feminine you must choose to make the right decisions. Within this discourse, lesbian particularly butch or boi identified lesbians are ghettoized because these identities are not seen as feminine. Literature on female masculinities though suggests that femininities and masculinities do not have to correspond to gendered or even sexed bodies (1998). This can be seen repeatedly in various US and UK lifestyle television shows, particularly through invoking fashion and "a 'natural' feminine self" that has "to be put together" correctly in order to be viewed as a female woman (Hollows 2000:140, 156). The central concern is around neoliberal ideals of free choice which are read as the 'right' choices. The consequences then of making 'other' choices may have negative impacts, demonstrated by the ghettoization of specific lesbian identities where lesbian identities can position some as 'non' or failing women.

In the United States, queer-identified youth are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to have experienced negativity and or violence from social, cultural, institutional, political and familial actors (Youth BreakOut, field notes 2012; O'Pry 2010). This negativity can be linked to things such as femininity and appearance meaning that vulnerabilities can be increased. Lesbian identity is constructed as very much at odds with normative sexuality and femininity through what was identified by Rich (1983) as the heterosexual matrix.

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media have become the key site of espousing the position of postfeminism, particularly through defining specific codes of conduct around female sexuality and femininity (McRobbie 2007:31).

Mainstream female culture excludes lesbians on the basis of normalised and stereotypical behaviours for both identities (Gauntlett 2008). This means that lesbian and queer women have had to create their own cultures (Eves 2004; Halberstam 1998). Indeed, research demonstrates that expression of feminine identities is multiple in sub and underground cultures (Bryant and Schofield 2007; Eves 2004; Hanmer 2003; Ussher and Mooney-Somers 2000).

Femininity is complex and when intersected with lesbian and/or queer sexualities, femininity can become even more complex and it is important to pay attention to these nuances and read normative discourses of femininity as not simply passive consumption in neoliberal culture but as a complex negotiation and rewriting of power relationships. Firstly, young women do not follow these ideals to the letter, there is often negotiation based on individuality or other identities such as class in addition to suspicion around the real interests of this media. This has been particularly well-documented in relation to romance fiction and chick lit readership (Radway 1991; Duncombe and Marsden 1995; Ferris and Young 2006; Long 2003).Young women then are not simply passive consumers or victims of culture that presents oppression as a choice, demonstrating that young women are active and resourceful negotiators of cultural texts and processes.

In fact, it has been identified by Hollows (2000) that young women are far from passive consumers of 'normative' femininity. In addition to part of the discourse actively encouraging women to have a stake in their feminine 'skills,' it has also been discovered that pleasure and power can be experienced through performing and renegotiating these rituals (Bordo 1999; Hollows 2000). Further research also shows that when engaging with normative ideals around femininity, women take the ideals "with a pinch of salt" as well as showing awareness that empowerment is being sold as a product (Schweickart 1993; Whlelhan 2004:3). This is particularly true for queer women who have redefined the boundaries of heterosexual cultural frames of reference to fit their own desires (Taormino 2010). Decision-making in this respect is interesting because it highlights that whilst young women are often presented with normative ideals regarding femaleness and womanhood, they do not necessarily accept it without questioning or rewriting these identities in their own image.

Whilst women are able to 'read' culture and transform it, female sexuality is still rigidly defined within this kind of postfeminist culture (Mabry 2006; Jackson 1995). These normative boundaries may affect how young women 'choose' to live their lives. There is increasing literature about young women and culture under 'normal' conditions that demonstrates the difficulties faced in 'growing up' and negotiating gender and sexuality (Daley et al 2008; Furlong et al 20111; Holzner and Oestomo 2004; Mabry 2006; Shildrick

2003; Shildrick and MacDonald 2006; McIllwaine and Datta 2007; McRobbie 1994; 1993; O'Pry 2010; Tanner 2010; Tolman 2009; West 1999; Williams 2002). It draws attention to the insidious traumas young women can face daily when they do not 'fit' the mould they see to be correct and also when they feel targeted by this culture through harassment. This may make young women quite resilient in times of crisis, indeed earlier research by Ollenburger (1992) shows that children might be more resilient than adults, but very little is known about their experiences.

## Sexualities and Youth

Research about youth sexualities shows that young people think of sexualities as much more than simply sexual acts (McIllwaine and Datta 2004:484,496). Others highlight that class, gender and race are highly influential factors in shaping youth cultural identities and group identities (Blackman 2005; Green 2010:117; Shildrick and Macdonald 2006).

Teenage girls have long been a concern to society and researchers. They are often seen as more at risk (particularly sexual risk) than boys (Griffin 2000). Linked to this risk from the 'outside' is also fear of the risks teenage girls pose to themselves, particularly through the increase in female drinking, sparking concerns over a lack of 'feminine' behaviour and a possible increase in risky behaviour such as engaging in unsafe sex (Jackson and Tinkler 2007). Teenage sexualities also intersect with class in terms of parental management of 'risky' behaviour and how young people express themselves in groups demonstrated how different communities organised by affluence handled risky behaviour in teenagers (Bould 2003; Shildrick 2003). However, the change in discourse within development scholarship and practice around the usefulness of adolescent girls reframes teenaged girls from sexual risks to agents of change and even as 'smart economics' (Chant 2016). Framing teenage girls in this way presents their empowerment as necessary for the good of others, but not for their own personal empowerment, continuing to frame the needs and interests of young people through an adult world view.

When discussing sexuality for instance, young people express specific desires and needs. West's (1999) youth-led paper on youth, identity and sexuality revealed that young people expressed a desire for more time to talk about sexuality, emphasising feelings rather than the biological 'acts' of sex. They also needed appropriate space within which they were recognised as autonomous individuals, expressing a desire to be treated "as a whole person" (West 1999:532, 536, 541). One of the problems highlighted by West for young people to achieve their sexual identities was their positioning of their status as "youngsters" which is also patrolled by guardians of heterosexual morality (West

1999:543). Indeed, recent work by McCormack on male youth sexualities and masculinities challenges existing norms about how teenage boys engage with sexualities (McCormack 2012; McCormack and Anderson 2010).

There is a small body of work on youth and same sex desire ( D'Augelli and Grossman 2006; Herdt 1989 and Leap 1999; Wilkinson and Pearson 2009). This research highlights that the social worlds of young people are very important to their lived-realities and where negative reactions are experienced or predicted, young people may experience negative emotions around their gendered-sexualities. In a 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex (LGBTQI) western context, work on LGBTQI research highlights that family acceptance and connectedness, caring adults, school safety and positive social environments are among the factors that are important to LGBTQI youth (Ryan et. Al 2009; Eisenberg and Resnic 2006; Hatzenbuehler 2011). It also highlights that adult perception and treatment of young people is key to their wellbeing. However, research shows that young people occupying more 'marginalised' groups such as LGBTQI groups cause greater distrust amongst adults (Kelly 2003).

West (1999) touches on LGBTQI sexualities, and interestingly found that even where young people expressed homophobic attitudes, embarrassment and distaste, they still welcomed discussion on this topic (1999:533). Wilton (1994) stresses that part of the reason why this is missing is due to an emphasis on reproductive sex and the exclusion of discussion of sexual pleasure. Research that takes youth as agents of their own sexualities highlight that it is not just sex that is an important factor in their lives but their sexualities, which are more than sexual acts in more than just western contexts (McIllwaine and Datta 2004:484,496).

## In Summary: Negotiating Normative Genders and Sexualities

The literature highlights that the social worlds of young people are central to their lived-realities. Whether their encounters in their social worlds are negative or positive around their sexualities, young people are likely to experience an array of emotions around their gendered-sexualities as they grow up. By clearly exploring gender with sexualities explicitly, we can pay attention to the relationship between both as 'intersecting' and complimentary identities. Looking at young women's experiences of growing up also combines sexualities with gender because one cannot be experienced without the other: sexualities are gendered.

Sexualities and genders are limited by norms and boundaries in terms of roles and relations and not fixed. Growing up involves changes such as those related to sexualities, but also many other new experiences, such as going to secondary school and moving away from home (Brannen and Nilsen 2002; Shanahan 2000). Change that occurs under 'normal' conditions can be unsettling, exciting and life-defining. Research shows that expected changes and rituals associated with 'growing up' can be altered, amplified or missed by rapid social change but very little research explores these changes following a 'natural' disaster and little research explicitly focusses on the changing identities of gender and sexualities as young women grow up following a disaster. In order to understand these changes and whether they can change even further when growing up post disaster, this study looks at how young women define the events in their lives, including the disaster itself.

## What is a Disaster?

### Introduction

The definition of disaster is very much disputed within and across disciplines. That said, since 1994 and the introduction of social vulnerability approaches (Blaikie et al 1994), there is increasing recognition that disasters are social events (Blaikie et al 1994; Hewitt 2013; Quarantelli 2005) and furthermore, that disasters are socially constructed (Quarantelli 1998). Definition disputes are not new, for example, the term 'culture' has never received universal agreement within anthropology but the discipline has not suffered because of it (Oliver-Smith 1996). One of the central discussions within disaster sociology is the difference between legislative or official discourses with subjective and 'layperson' discourses (Buckle 2016; 2005).This points us towards existing structures of vulnerability and capacity that can be altered, amplified or silenced because of a disaster as well as disasters creating new problems, issues and processes in people's lives. In order to explore the lived experience of disaster, it is important to understand how these definitions can invisibilise subjective disaster experiences and therefore miss crucial knowledge on what it is like to live through a disaster if subjective narratives are not taken into account. Scholarship suggests that these lived experiences may not necessarily coincide with what is traditionally imagined to be the disaster that is usually measured from a legislative or academic definition of what a disaster is (Buckle 2005; Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998).

So far, this thesis has discussed the importance of lifecourse events and how young people, and young women in particular are situated in terms of 'growing up' and experiencing

change. 'Typical' trajectories such as progressing through the education system as well as 'abnormal' events that can change or disrupt growing up have shown that whilst there is existing research in youth studies generally, little examines growing up in an abnormal setting such as a disaster.

In this study, young women's experiences of growing up post 'Hurricane Katrina' are explored. The disaster is defined as Hurricane Katrina, a 'natural' hazard that caused significant disruption to life. However, as the research has discussed above, subjectivity is important here and most importantly, the research seeks to understand the experiences young women had and have of growing up after Hurricane Katrina through their own eyes, in their own words and documenting their own experiences. As such, the very notion of disaster also needs to be explored in the same way as gender, sexuality and youth have been drawn into question. Here, the thesis illustrates that disaster too is just as unstable a category.

**The Importance of Considering the Question of "What is a Disaster?"**

This research seeks to know what young people experience and how they view the disaster event, including whether the disaster event was as significant as the other events in their lives and whether the disaster raised questions for change, positively and negatively. To achieve these aims, the very notion of a 'disaster,' what 'counts' as a disaster and for whom is called into question. Here, the thesis argues for a subjective and life history approach to disaster also looking at the broader lens of 'crises.' From this perspective, the natural hazard that caused the disaster is not seen as the only disastrous event. For example, Bradshaw (2013) has encouraged scholars to look at the 'disasters within the disaster.' These can be defined as secondary disasters which on a macro level include disease pandemics and on a micro or household level include loss of assets that impede recovery. Using a crises lens where individual and collective experiences of the processes of post-disaster can be explored can allow for greater nuance in terms of understanding what post-disaster events were the most disastrous in the lives of the young women who participated in the study.

It is now broadly recognised by disaster scholars that what actually constitutes a disaster is also highly subjective in terms of how a catastrophic event is experienced (see Quarantelli 1998; Perry and Quarantelli 2005). That is, the 'disaster' described by survivors of a catastrophic event may not be the disaster event itself but may be other events in their lives that are exacerbated or amplified by the disaster event (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998). Gender has been well-documented as a factor that can change the way a disaster is experienced due to pre-existing unequal gender relations and discriminatory

norms, mainly directed toward women (Ariyabandu 2006; Bradshaw 2013; Enarson and Charabarti 2009; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Enarson and Meyreles 2004; Enarson and David 2012). This is also linked to the body of work that has emerged from vulnerability scholars (See Blaikie et al 1994) and within this, the extensive scholarship of 'gender and disasters' paradigm (See Bradshaw 2013; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Enarson and Meyreles 2004; Enarson and Chakrabarti 2009). A body of work highlights that what a disaster 'is' is not the same to everyone and because of this, whose and what disasters count can be drawn into question. However, a large body of work called 'the social paradigm of disasters' is widely recognised and it is broadly understood that disasters are social constructs with social consequences (Blaikie et al 1994). Literature within this highlights a window of opportunity for positive change but little evidence exists that disasters can result in positive change (Byrne and Baden 1995). Research emerging from post-Asian Tsunami Sri Lanka questioned the longevity of the 'window of opportunity' where two conflicting sides, The LTTE and the Sri Lankan government temporarily joined forces to help people recover but soon returned to war when disparities in aid and existing tensions re-emerged (Samual 2005; Uyangoda 2005). Rather, they often serve as a window into existing structures of power relations, particularly with gender (Ariyabandu 2009l; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009).

Gender is one such space that has been indicated as a process ripe for transformation following a disaster (Byrne and Baden 1995). The scholarship on gender is rooted in the social paradigm of disasters made popular by Blaikie et al (1994), providing an entry point for a scholarly and practical focus on gender. Within this literature, is it recognised that gender as an existing social process is important in times of 'normalcy' and in times of disaster because it is integral to societies, cultures, communities, families and individuals through the formation of identities, perceptions and attitudes (Ariyabandu 2009). This body of work demonstrates that it is the inequalities of the everyday that contribute to risk and are the root causes of vulnerability to risk (Blaike et al 1994; Bradshaw 2014; 2013; Enarson 1998a; 2002). However, this scholarship also shows that women are not simply passive victims of disaster, nor are they a homogenous category (Enarson and Meyreles 2004). Rather, gender is but one aspect of many identities and whilst some intersections have been widely researched, such as development and poverty (Bradshaw 2002; 2004; 2009; 2013), other identities such as sexualities and age are still relatively unknown (Fothergill and Peek 2008:4; Howes, Gorman-Murrey and McKinnon 2014).

One of the events that can cause young lives to 'change dramatically' could be experiencing a 'natural' disaster and indeed literature notes that massive and sudden social change can alter young adulthood (Bucholtz 2002; Condon 1990). It is also important to remember

that disaster does not happen in a vacuum nor does disaster occur on 'blank' landscape (Blaikie et al 1994). So whilst it may amplify or change trajectories, life does go on and for young women, they are likely to be going through lifecourse events for the first time or making 'new' choices, decisions and having 'new' experiences (O'Pry 2012; Ryan et al 2010; Youth BreakOut, field notes 2012; Schweickart 1993; Whelhan 2004; Williams 2002; Wilton 1994). These choices, decisions and experiences may then be impacted by going through a disaster at the same time. Indeed, Enarson notes that "intimate decisions" and relationships are highly significant post-disaster (Enarson 2012b:87-104). So when these intimate decisions and relationships are new, they may be even more significant because many usual aspects of life such as home, community and school could be disrupted and displaced, however because the intersections of youth, gender and sexuality have been relatively unexplored, little is known about these experiences.

## The Social Construction of Disaster – what counts and for whom?

***Disaster:*** *A natural event such as a flood, earthquake, or hurricane that causes great damage or loss of life.*

*(Oxforddictionaries.com 2014a)*

Today, the social dimensions of 'natural' disaster are widely recognised (Blaikie et al 1994). However, as the definition provided by Oxford Dictionaries above indicates, a popular or traditional definition of a natural disaster will almost always invoke a natural hazard as the starting point. The definition above demonstrates this by suggesting that the natural event "causes" the disaster. This is a very limiting definition and may not 'match up' to the lived experiences of disaster situations or even how people themselves define the disasters in their lives (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998:165; Stallings 2005:242). It may be that when we think of disasters, we think of natural triggers such as earthquakes, landslides and floods. Even where it is recognised that the disaster stems from existing social structures, there is a focus on the natural trigger, known as the hazard (Blaikie et al 1994). Indeed, some scholars suggest that a disaster by definition should always somehow be linked to natural systems to distinguish it from other types of crises (Oliver-Smith 1998:193).

Others view non-natural triggers such as chemical (nuclear plant explosion), 'man-made' (famines), or 'man-driven' (war) as disasters. However, in practice, these 'events' are defined differently and academically, can be attached to different literature, funding, organisations and response. War and conflict particularly have been academically and

practically differentiated from 'natural' disaster for some time. A key device that allows for the separation of different kinds of crisis in sociology is how people behave during different events or processes (Quarantelli 2005:380-81). However, in practice behaviours can change. For example, rioting and looting are not traditionally associated with natural disaster but rather with conflict situations (Quarantelli 2005:380). However, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina news media reports quickly emerged with images of looting (Sommers, Apfelbaum, Dukes, Toosi and Wang 2006; Voorhees, Vick and Perkins 2007). Disasters then can be said to have a life of their own with their own "genealogy" as Foucault (1984) would term it, which contributes to the post-event behaviour.

At the very least, disaster can be said to involve negative effects and disruption (Gilbert 1998:17; Rosenthal 1998:147; Kroll Smith and Gunter 1998:161; Stallings 1998:129; Boin 2005; Quarantelli 2005:346) Indeed, it is often the effects or outcomes of an event that deem an event as a 'disaster' or as something else. For example, Kreps (1998) provides an illustration of the complexity of what 'is' a disaster and the importance of 'effects' by using the following example. Highway accidents resulting in death happen throughout the year are not likely to be defined as disaster, (these are 'accidents', but preventable) whereas an aircraft crash resulting in mass death may be classed as a disaster. Poverty, hunger, and social unrest are not traditionally seen as disasters but as "social concerns." What is interesting is that disasters provoke "social concerns" but are seen as separate, often outside events, particularly with 'natural' disasters. All 'events' discussed and disputed invoke some kind of unpreventable 'crisis,' some kind of instability and result in some kind of negative effect, even though not all appear to be defined as disasters. In the case of highway accidents, there is a general consensus that such types of negative effect are not disasters. The differentiation occurs through separating accident and crises because accidents can occur without crises, but crises can occur without accident (Gilbert 1998:16).

It has become increasingly understood that 'separating' disaster from crisis, from accident, is highly complex because lived experiences of crisis events in particular are highly subjective (see Quarantelli 1998; Perry and Quarantelli 2005). Furthermore, 'natural' disaster is not simply one event or one process but rather provokes many kinds of crises. However, the macro-level crisis which can be easily identified by legislative definitions often seems to be the event or process that sparks international and national response. This often means that the micro-level crises that occurred prior or as a result such as secondary disasters (Bradshaw 2013) may be the events or processes that affect the lives of survivors more profoundly (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998). Those that experience a catastrophic event may not feel the event itself was the disaster but may indicate that other events in their lives that can be exacerbated or amplified by the disaster event have

further reaching consequences (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998). Indeed, as leading scholars in the field of disasters suggest, legislative and academic definitions of disaster are also subjective and can depend on such things as academic training, methodology and positionality of the researcher themselves (Porfiriev 1998).

The media coverage of disaster provides a vivid portrait of how disasters are selectively and subjectively defined. (Alexander 2005:33,37; Boin 2005; Britton 2005; Jigyasu 2005:167; Scanlon 1988). Media coverage can create a disaster in the same way that lack of media coverage can invisiblise a whole disaster or elements of the disaster (Cottle 2008). Within this, disaster survivors are equally visibilised and invisibilised depending on newsworthiness (Cottle 2008). In the case of Katrina, race and class disparities were brought to attention (Elliot and Paiss 2006; Hartman and Squires 2006; Logan 2006). However, at the same time, racial tensions were exacerbated by accusations of violence and looting (Sommers, Apfelbaum, Dukes, Toosi and Wang 2006; Voorhees, Vick and Perkins 2007). Alongside these highly visibilised groups, were others that remained marginalised such as queer Katrina survivors (D'Ooge 2008), particularly the transgender community (Luft 2008:14; YouthBreakOut).

Media definitions are linked to presumed newsworthiness but can also be linked to what has been termed the 'legislative definitions' (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998). Legislative definitions are the dominant approach to defining what constitutes a disaster and can be seen through the production of 'blueprints' such as 'stage models.' Such tools are used to identify the various and demarcated stages in disaster where from this professionalised approach each stage can be managed using 'expert' knowledge (Dombrowsky 19998:29; Hewitt 1998:79). This creates a cluster of specialists who separate themselves from non-specialists and thus maintain and preserve their right to manage and control disaster situations (Stallings 1998:141). Here, the 'science' of disaster is a reflection of the market rather than a reflection of community needs and interests (Gilbert 1995:232-233).

Traditional and legislative definitions of disaster may miss what disaster means in lived realities (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998). This legislative voice is absent of local, personal and subjective experiences that separates society (people and their communities) from sociology (professional/expert knowledge) (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998:164). Indeed, what the 'real' disaster is for people's lives is drawn into question here. For example, secondary disasters and 'the disasters within the disaster' are often neglected from professional visions of disaster (Akuno 2006; Bradshaw 2013; 2004; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009; Clarke and Mohan 1995:3; Picou et al 2009:284; Seager 2014). Further to this, research also shows that the reliance of a speedy return to normality favoured by disaster practitioners is oversimplified creating a skewed picture of the complexity of

rebuilding a 'home' symbolically, emotionally and psychologically as well as physically (Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:89).Through engaging with personal accounts, we will be able to enter the field and increase learning about how people and communities experience events that negatively impact their lives, how they continue to live their lives, how they carry on and how they survive (Boin 2005:161; Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998:167). To do this, it is the mundane and every-day that is important in revealing how communities and individuals think about risk and potential risk (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998:165). For example, Fordham and Ketteridge found that women's experiences of disaster demonstrate that rebuilding lives is far from normal. Buying new possessions to replace those lost is associated with lack of satisfaction whereas usually, buying things is associated with joy (1998:90). However, at the same time a striking resilience in the face of multiple stresses was also observed, with some women even reporting a more positive self-image because they came to recognise themselves as strong (1998:90).

By overemphasising legislative voices, authority is removed from the people themselves even though these very people whose definitions of disaster emerge through their abilities to cope with, recover from, experience and think about disaster events can really show us what a disaster 'is' (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998:165,167). This view suggests that crisis is much broader than the 'big event' stage model disaster. The legislative voice does not take into account that there are many ways of seeing and not seeing. Not all events within the broader disaster are defined as disaster or even as crisis despite those events possessing characteristics within legislative definitions such as instability and negative effects. Kroll-Smith and Gunter (1998) demonstrate personal experience of disaster is often a lot more complicated and complex than a set of stages and can act as a metaphor for other feelings around disaster processes, involving things like relationships and social mobility that do not necessarily refer to the 'real' disaster (1998:165).

## Disasters as Negative Effects and the Framework of Crisis

Academics have argued that 'disaster' always involves some kind of "un-ness" such as negative effects, uncertainty and disruption (Britton 2005:69; Boin 2005:158-64; Buckle 2005:191; Cutter 2005:48; Dynes 1998; Jigyasu 2005:51; Kreps 1998; Quarantelli 2005:343; Rosenthal 1998; Smith 2005 217; Stallings 2005:242-264; 1998:129-131). Despite not explicitly citing 'crises' as their conceptual framework, these terms of "un-ness" link closely to the theme of crisis. Some explicitly engage with the term and refer to a disaster as a category within the broader literature and definition of crises and collective stress (Barton 2005; Boin 2005; Dynes 1998; Gilbert 1998; Oliver-Smith 1998:183;

Quarantelli 1998:251; Stallings 2005). Due to this notion of 'un-ness' and the broad scope that it offers conceptually, the disaster itself could be repositioned as a subcategory of crisis and/or collective stress (Barton 2005; Boin 2005; Stallings 2005). This could be useful in terms of opening up the spaces that are traditionally fenced off from disasters in order to make space for other events and also to understand if a 'natural' disaster is different from other kinds of crises. "Un-ness" could be further useful to make space for those identities that are usually on the periphery, such as non-normative sexualities and genders, also often positioned outside of the normal realm due to their own un-ness.

There is broad agreement that disasters always involve some kind of element of disruption with negative consequences (Britton 2005:69; Boin 2005:158-64; 2005:282; Buckle 2005:191; Cutter 2005:48; Dynes 1998; Jigyasu 2005:51; Kreps 1998; Quarantelli 2005:343; Rosenthal 1998; Smith 2005 217; Stallings 2005 242-264; 1998:129-131). The core themes within this argument centre around the premise that disasters are the disruption of societies through uncertainty and vulnerability that negatively affect the routine of everyday life (Gilbert 1998; Stallings 1998:131). Disasters again are seen as social because their effects are stretched further than the hazard/event itself, but as complex processes that reveal society's weak points (Kreps 1998; Porfiriev 1998; Dombrowsky 1998). Here, disaster can be seen as a test of social and cultural protections and where these fail, the potential for disaster emerges (Dombrowsky 1998). Indeed, "if there are no negative social consequences, there is no disaster" (Quarantelli 2005:347).

The idea that social consequences are a necessary part of an event becoming a disaster could be helpful in terms of removing the onus from the hazard and placing it on the results which is the disaster(s). However, we are faced with a difficult problem here, if we are to look to results as the answer to the question of what is a disaster, tomorrow's disaster will always be unimaginable (Boin 2005:171). In other words, simply because we cannot think of a set of consequences does not mean that they do not exist. In the 1980's, nuclear disaster was unimaginable to the world and in the UK in the 2010's, the rapid influx of refugees now known as the 'migrant crisis' was also unimaginable. Full prevention of disaster and crises is impossible because despite experience, there may not be enough knowledge to foresee what will come in the future. This in turn leads to other issues around over-routinisation and the trap of the politics game (Boin 2005: 168-169). Even where certain kinds of hazards are well known such as hurricanes and floods, this does not seem to stop the onset of disaster. For example, Bangladesh and Pakistan have experienced severe flooding for many years and these flood hazards continue to turn into disasters year after year (Webster, Toma and Kim 2011; Hofer and Messerli 1997). Hurricanes, particularly in Louisiana and Central America are also known hazards and

throughout history mitigation of these hazards has failed, creating 'new' disasters (Delaney and Shrader 2000; Hartman and Squires 2006). Crisis, it seems, despite its un-ness, is a part of everyday life, whether living in crisis or living in wait of crisis because the hazard itself although often known, cannot be fully mitigated against. This draws further attention to the idea that it is collapse of social and cultural protections rather than simply the hazard that causes disaster (Kreps 1998).

Crisis is seen broadly as serious disorder (Glibert 1998).The defining features of crises is the disorganisation of social systems and the psychocultural impacts on human cognition and culture (Dynes 1998:111; Oliver-Smith 1998:183). This opens up those non-traditional disasters mentioned above because focusing broadly on disorganisation of social systems means that we can focus on those events that would be described as "lesser crises and stress situations" (Dynes 1974:4). Crisis can also be seen as a complimentary concept to disaster, where disaster can be defined as a subcategory of crisis rather than submerged into a crisis umbrella (Boin 2005:163-164; Stallings 2005:272; 2001; 1998; 1997). Thus disaster can refer to a specific set of characteristics but also allows disaster scholars have the scope to study 'other' crises (Boin 2005:164) and others who experience crisis.

Boin describes disaster as a "crisis with a bad ending" this bad ending must be in context of other characteristics of perceived disruption, loss of confidence in legitimacy and a collective belief of both of the above (Boin 2005:163). Social disruption occurs every day but not all of it should be called a disaster (Stallings 2005:274). Further to this, whilst positioning disaster within the broader realm of crisis, expanding the interpretation of disaster may negate the purpose to come to agreement by allowing for too much generalisation. Therefore, it is important to emphasise disaster as a subtype of crisis, distinct from others, but part of a bigger picture nonetheless (Stallings 2005:272-273). That said, Boin draws out an important point in terms of who counts when a disaster is defined or not. For example, large-scale events that have been characterised as disaster have simultaneously failed to meet key defining features of both broader definitions such as social disruption as well as 'classic' definitions such as life-sustaining failures. Here Boin draws attention to the fact that whilst professional concerns around definitions are valid and useful, if laypeople do not consider an event a disaster, such professional definitions have little significance (Boin 2005:164). So when Stallings raises his concerns around real versus exaggerated fear (Stallings 2005:250) it is worth considering Kroll-Smith and Gunter (1998) who remind us that it is not our place as researchers to tell people whether the disaster is real, particularly when we are studying communities and individuals (1998:165). Here attention is drawn to interpretivist and subjective accounts of what is a

disaster. In order to allow for greater scope that would include an interpretivist and subjective approach to the study of disaster, a crisis lens on disaster seems appropriate (Boin 2005; Stallings 2005). Due to this thesis being concerned with subjective experience of disaster, it will also consider broader crisis understandings within the definition of disaster.

## Theorising Disasters

Scholars exploring the question of how to define disaster for sociological enquiry suggest looking to broader sociological theory in order to explain disasters (Barton 2005; Boin 2005; Buckle 2005; Dombrowsky 2005; Stallings 1998). Stallings (1998) suggests revisiting 'old-school' sociology such as the work of Durkheim, Marx and Weber on social order to show how disaster disrupts, drawing out the un-ness of disaster events. We should then use this wider framework and theory of social order rather than a specific social theory of disaster because it would be difficult to apply to other social phenomena and therefore have little relevance to sociology (Stallings 1998:127). Within a broader theory of social order the onus would be placed on how order is sustained or destroyed through times of uncertainty that include but are not limited to uncertainty brought on by disaster (1998:132, 136-37). This makes sense if we take the view that classic disaster definitions are too narrow in focus with an overemphasis of the hazard or trigger rather than the social outcomes of disaster so that scholarship on war, emergencies, pandemics such as HIV/AIDS are seen as entirely separate from disasters.

One issue of drawing on classical sociology is that it is highly functionalist and suggests that disasters as part of sociological theory is searching for universal truths that can be applied anywhere. Indeed, Stallings does suggest we should be looking for the bigger picture in disaster scholarship (1998:137). This might be an out-dated viewpoint. However, looking at broader sociological processes to assess, explore and problematize assumptions about social behaviours during times of crisis like disasters could be very interesting. For example, the notion of "exception routines" (1998:138) can be read in relation to lifecourse research and how what is seen to be abnormal becomes normalised (1998:142) drawing attention to the smaller picture and subjectivity. For example, hurricane evacuation can become routine. Stallings (1998) demonstrates how this exception routine process can be linked to Durkheim and Weber and more recently to the work of Giddens and Luhman around their contributions to the theories of social order, social solidarity and social disruption (1998:142-143). The onus in this broader sociology where disaster is but a stage or laboratory is about what disasters reveal (1998:145).

This idea is echoed later by authors in the 2005 edition of 'What is a Disaster?' collection (Fritz cited in Barton 2005:135; Smith 2005:231).

Boin (2005) suggests an all-encompassing approach that takes into account politics, media, corporations, social organisations, academia and people in order to analyse disaster (2005:157). Dombrowsky (2005) adds further relevance to the argument for a general social theory, providing us with a problematisation of 'truth' leading us to a more interpretive and subjective position (2005:93). Indeed, perhaps the link between the two is provided by Buckle (2005) who reminds us a crucial question in sociology is relating the micro to the macro (2005:176). For example, changes in international thinking on social rights has changed the way we view sociology and the way society is defined (Barton 2005:133). Stallings would link this to the notion of broader social change outside of crisis that is still significant during crisis (2005:251).

More recently, academics have been encouraging disaster scholars to engage with underexplored theoretical perspectives and disciplines, such as gender theory and gender studies. Through a broader sociology lens, we can also think more broadly theoretically about gender theories and queer theories. Gender theory and disaster sociology is felt to complement one another due to the similar concepts and therefore a closer alliance is needed (Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2007). Indeed, gender and disaster scholars have noted that social systems are never gender neutral (Enarson and Morrow 1997). Despite Quarantelli's call for increased engagement with new theoretical approaches such as gender and feminist scholarship, Tierney (2012) warns that disaster research is actively resistant to new ideas, particularly those related to gender due to a history rooted in an authoritarian control and command model traditionally dominated by men (Fordham 1998; Tierney 2012:245).

## Summary: Definitions or Creations?

It is important to ask what we mean by disaster because those who have experienced disaster might have different understandings; it is those very people that we must focus on in order to understand how people cope in times of crisis and in order to think about bringing about any kind of positive change. For this reason, this research takes a subjective, life history approach that places the views of the participants at the centre. However, it has also been informed by what could be called the 'dictionary definition' of disaster and through a legislative lens.

Within sociology, the debate about what we mean by disaster has spanned decades (Quarantelli 1998; Quarantelli and Perry 2005). 'New' disasters such as acts of terrorism, war and protracted conflict, nuclear disaster, humanitarian crisis and complex emergencies can all be clearly understood as sub-types of crises and as disaster but often when the term 'disaster' is invoked, popularly and legislatively, those hailing the disaster have often talked about a natural hazard with disastrous consequences rather than the above.

Hurricane Katrina was a natural hazard that became a national disaster. The onus though has always been on the natural hazard even though many scholars drew attention to the fact that the aftermath of Katrina was very much caused by an intersection of social processes such as state failure, systematic racism, widespread poverty and poorly maintained infrastructure (David and Enarson 2012; Elliot and Paiss 2006; Hartman and Squires 2006; Henrici 2010; Logan 2006). Contemporary disasters such as the Asian Tsunami, the Haiti Earthquake and Hurricane Katrina have revealed quite starkly the social outcome of hazards, natural or otherwise, particularly through media response (Cottle 2008). Even though disasters are often linked to natural hazards conceptually (Oliver-Smith 1996), there is an argument to include other kinds of disaster such as technical disaster, 'man-made' disaster or to place the 'natural' disaster within the broader framework of crisis in order to understand how societies and people cope with stressors (Boin 2005).

How a disaster is defined matters greatly in terms of how disasters affect young women growing up for three reasons. Firstly, research by Quarantelli (2005) points to different behaviour post-disaster which would include gendered behaviours, but do not account for youth. Secondly, viewing disasters through a crisis lens and through an interpretivist, subjective lens might allow a more detailed understanding of how disasters are actually experienced (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998). Thirdly, defining disaster in terms of crisis draws out the notion of its "un-ness" and also allows us to look at those traditionally invisibilised by disaster by their own un-ness, young women and non-normative sexualities, at odds with what is seen as normal. This could include a focus on the lifecourse and within this, a further focus on young women and growing up as they overcome or lived through disaster as well as how disasters are forgotten, internalised, storied, become part of lifecourse and the decisions as one 'grows up.'

# Chapter 6: Gender and Disasters

**Introduction: Disasters are a "Gendered Terrain"[2]**

Women are increasingly seen as beneficiaries and participants in disaster relief and reconstruction efforts (Bradshaw 2014:563,566; Enarson and Morrow 1998:225) that can be attributed to tireless efforts of gender and disaster scholars who strived to ensure gender and disasters was seen as a crucial and necessary paradigm through which to explore disasters, but this was not always the case. Up until the 1990's, disaster actors took a 'humanitarian relief' perspective and often focused on addressing immediate and basic needs, overlooking complexities such as gender, class, age, race and culture (Blaikie et al 1994). This urgent and immediate needs perspective was delivered through short-term relief. Alongside this approach, disaster mitigation and prevention operated through technical 'fix it' approaches (Blaikie et al 1994; Enarson and Morrow 1998). Both were at best 'gender neutral' and at worst 'gender blind' in a male-dominated field (Bolin et al 1998:29; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Enarson and Phillips 2008; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998; Hewitt 1998). In fact, 'the tyranny of the urgent' often resulted in a gender-neutral approach because gender concerns were not viewed as critical (BRIDGE, 1996; Delaney and Shrader, 2000; Enarson 2000b). This created a 'gender silence' (Bhatt 1995:3) resulting in negative impacts precisely because of the failures to address the complexities of intersecting identities despite literature emerging that warned intersecting identities are likely to change the way a disaster is experienced (Blaikie et al 1994).

In the 1990s, research about women's experiences began to emerge, demonstrating that it was mostly women who bore the brunt of gender neutral processes in times of disaster and highlighted that women may have increased vulnerabilities, particularly when intersecting with other identities and issues (Enarson and Morrow 1998; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998; Ikeda 1995; Kabir 1995; Krisharaj 1997). Indeed, the saying "women and children first" is more of a fiction than a reality in post-disaster response (Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:83-84). A key issue is that disaster mitigation rarely considers empowerment as a central component despite the fact that for disaster mitigation to be effective, social justice must be its linchpin (Enarson and Morrow 1998:226).

[2] Term coined by Enarson and Morrow (1998) The Gendered Terrain of Disasters

Gender has now become very well documented after a disaster. A lot of the significant early work came from a North American perspective, particularly the ground-breaking work of Elaine Enarson and Betty Hearne Morrow whose scholarly work on women and disasters was based on Hurricane Andrew (1992) in the United States (Enarson and Morrow 1998:xi). This culminated in significant events during the 1990s in the establishment of Gender and Disaster scholarship, some of the most notable being the Gender and Disaster Network (GDN) and the practice of Gender Analysis (Sanz 2009).[3] Furthermore, new voices and directions have emerged particularly after the Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina (Bradshaw 2014:561).

However, despite this increase in scholarship, knowledge and attention, feminist researchers continue to voice dissatisfaction over the way in which gender has been included in disaster practice and a fear that many diverse gendered interests and needs have continued to be marginalised (Bradshaw 2014; 2010; 2009; Cupples 2007; Enarson 2000a; Enarson 1998c; Enarson and Meyreles 2004; Fordham 1998; Overton 2007:13; Seager 2012; Tierney 2012). It has been suggested that there has been little research on the day to day realities of gendered lives following a disaster (Bolin et al 1998:28; Houghton 2009:99). Disasters do not impact everyone in the same way and gender is one of the many processes that lead to different experiences. Where there are multiple intersecting identities and processes most lives in reality are highly varied which, whilst challenging to policy makers and disaster managers (Enarson and Morrow 1998:213) does not mean that the rich tapestry of gendered lives should not be understood.

Gender and Disaster scholars have warned that using a gender approach uncritically can lead to overgeneralisation, creating a category of women that overemphasises women as dependent and in need whilst overlooking women's capacities and strengths (Enarson,

[3] The publication of 'The Gendered Terrain of Disasters,' in 1998 by Enarson and Morrow brought together a collection of works and made them accessible to a wider audience as well as highlighting the gaps and proposing 'best practices' and guidelines for the future (see Enarson and Morrow 1998). Elaine Enarson in particular has been prolific in her publication and politics on gender and disasters, demonstrating her continued commitment (2000; 2001; 2002; 2008; 2012). Further key developments in the field of gender and disasters included dedicated conferences (such as Reaching Women and Children in Disasters 2000; Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction 2004) and the first gendered disasters framework, the Honolulu Call to Action which informed the Hyogo framework for Action (HfA) (2005) and greater recognition for the Gender and Disasters Network (Anderson (2009) cited in Enarson and Chakrabarti 2009:3). The GDN took advantage of modern communications and was established as an online source, now a global and extensive hub of research, best practices and information (Sanz 2009).

Fothergill and Peek 2007; Fordham 2004). These uncritical perceptions and attitudes have constructed women as passive, vulnerable victims (Ariyabandu 2009:7,9; Enarson and Meyreles 2004:49; Valdes 2009:26; Wallace 1994). Women's needs have often been overlooked in disaster response and where needs appear to be addressed, women often do not benefit directly (Ariyabandu 2009; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009:79; Valdes 2009:18). Their capacities and skills have also been left unsupported and often women have been invisible in recovery despite their participation in DRR denying them the opportunity to contribute skills and knowledge (Ariyabandu 2009:7,12-13; Ariyabandu 2006; Enarson 2005; Valdes 2009:21). This is despite the fact that women's organisations and women's movements are usually at the forefront of relief, reconstruction and mitigation efforts, particularly at community level (Akcar 2001; Mehta 2009:66-67). A change in focus towards women and girls as the "key to resilience" post-disaster has meant the post-disaster lens is firmly pointed at their abilities to participate in recovery, particularly highlighting their capacities or resilience, however, Bradshaw (2013) has warned that rather than leading to positive transformation for women's rights, women have greater burdens placed on them resulting in a feminisation of responsibility post-disaster with few of the benefits.

This is very much linked to the notion of a window of opportunity that is said to open after a disaster whereby positive transformation, such as a change in unequal gendered power relations, can occur (Byrne and Baden 1995; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:94; Ollenburger and Tobin 1998). Research encouraged us to view emergencies as opportunities to begin empowerment projects, particularly in developing countries (Weist 1998:17; Motsisi 1993; 1994a). However, there is little evidence to demonstrate any real change occurs after a disaster (Bradshaw 2014:566; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009:76). Rather than windows of opportunities, Ariyabandu suggests that disasters simply show us prevailing gender inequalities in a society (Ariyabandu 2009:11). Indeed, research shows that after the immediate impact it is common for people to try to re-establish the old social orders (Oliver Smith 1986:100). The window of opportunity then is more akin to a magnifying glass that brings the focus to society's social fault lines (Mehta 2009:69) thus revealing what was previously hidden. In reality though, disasters are limited only to what they reveal in terms of unequal power relations rather than meaningful transformation, with little evidence positive change can occur, including gender relations (Ariyabandu 2009). Indeed, the scholarship above highlights many negative changes to gender relations if anything.

**What we 'Know' about Gender in Disasters**

Feminist scholars working on gender and disaster have produced significant knowledge about gender roles, relations, processes, norms and behaviours highlighting that disasters are gendered processes. Gender Analysis emerged in the 1990s gaining particular momentum in the 2000s and has provided an alternative paradigm to document the wide range of skills and resources women utilise in the face of disaster at individual, household, community and organisational levels demonstrating the heterogeneity of women's experiences and provoking lively and exciting discussion, research and theoretical discussion (Badri 2006:461; Bradshaw 2001b;, 2002; Brunsma et.al. 2007; Delaney and Shrader 2000; Enarson 1998a:5; Enarson 2000a; Enarson and Fordham 2001; Enarson et.al. 2007; Fisher 2005; Fothergill 1998:12; Rashid and Michaud 2000). This research demonstrated that gender processes and identities are important in times of 'normalcy' and in times of disaster because they are integral to societies, cultures, communities, families and individuals through the formation of identities, perceptions and attitudes (Ariyabandu 2009:5,6; Mehta 2009:58; Saad 2009:151; Valdes 2009:20,24). However, the research also draws attention to the fact that in times of disaster, women's rights are often decreased and threatened.

Below, the thesis will explore the key themes related to gender including the negative changes to gender relations as a result of disaster. The aim is to demonstrate what is known about gender and disaster, particularly in relation to the aims and objectives of this thesis. To this end, the themes explored will draw attention to experiences, choices and decisions, gender and intersectionalities, intimate relationships and the notion of disaster. The themes are not exhaustive but provide an overview of the knowledge on gender and disasters along with the gaps in knowledge.

***GBV and The Fear of Violence the GBV***

There is a belief that gender-based violence (GBV) increases following a disaster and this belief is supported in small-scale research and anecdotal evidence (Ariyabandu 2005:9; Enarson 1999; Enarson et al 2007:135; Houghton 2009; Horton 2012; True 2014; Stoler and Ager 2011; Valdes 2009:22). However, there is a lack of 'big' data for any real generalisations across continents and contexts to be sure (Eklund and Telliar 2012). That said, a review of quantitative studies undertaken on GBV post-disaster suggests that there is a valid argument not only for an increase in fear but an actual increase in a specific kind of GBV known as intimate partner violence (IPV) (Stoler and Ager 2011). This has been particularly well-documented in the USA context (Dobson 1994; Enarson 1999b; Honeycomb 1994; Fothergill 2004; Morrow 1997; Morrow and Enarson 1996; Palinkas, Downs, Petterson and Russell 1993; Williams 1994).

IPV can also be linked to an increase in family conflict in general that has different gendered consequences (Bradshaw 2001a). Again, a more comprehensive understanding of household and family structures can reveal the complexities related to issues facing women post-disaster. For example, depending on available resources outside the home, a disaster can force women to return to or stay with abusive partners due to lack of housing alternatives (Fothergill 2004). Paradoxically, disasters can also create space for women to leave their abusers (Fothergill 2004; Morrow and Enarson 1996).

Fear of male violence is a cross-cultural norm in many geographical contexts. A body of small-scale post-disaster research shows that women's fear of violence increases (Fisher 2005; Horton 2012; Saito 2012:273). Furthermore, as Saad (2009) asserts in her research, actual violence may not have increased but women and girls' awareness of risk of violence was heightened. As a result, issues around privacy in temporary shelter, particularly camp environments around private washing facilities can arise (Tockle 1994). This makes the post-disaster experience for women stressful. Concern for girls is a particular issue with research showing that girls can be more vulnerable to sexual abuse and families also express fear of violence against their daughters (Fisher 2005; Wiest, Mocellini and Motsisi 1994).

Even if it is true that an increase in violence is not necessarily real, within GBV, violence against women in 'normal times' already disproportionately affects women so it is important to take GBV and IPV and fear of violence into account. For example, in post-tsunami Sri Lanka the government took the decision to provide compensation only to the male head of the household, therefore disqualifying women and taking away crucial assets, forcing some women to stay with abusive husbands (Goonasekere 2012). On the other hand, where proper and appropriate support is available, women are able to find support and strength. For example, in the post-East Japan Earthquake, The Purple Hotline was set up by the Multi Language Centre FACIL which provided support to women experiencing violence at the hands of their partners, particularly aimed at minority languages so that women were able to access the information they needed in a language they best understood (Saito 2012:273). This demonstrates that gender can intersect with other identities making some women more vulnerable than others. Ensuring support is essential because where gender discriminating practices occur, women can be placed in risky and dangerous positions. It can be as simple as ensuring there is a provision for safety that includes safe access to transport and spaces (IASC 2006:86).

***Collective Space and Social Networks***

Women and men use space differently in relation to social life, family life and paid work among many other things (Boris and Prugal 1996 cited in Enarson 1999). Small-scale

research has shown that where women engage with community and cultural space, this space can sometimes enable women to come to terms with disasters (Enarson 2000a). For example, after the Red River Valley Flood in the Upper Midwest of the United States in North Dakota and Minnesota, a community of women in a collective interest group that did traditional 'quilting' enabled women participants to express gender-specific experiences and feelings (Enarson 2000a).

Following the East Japan Earthquake relief efforts saw a special provision of a room for women where health consultations were available as well as wellbeing services such as massages, relaxation and social space away from families which was much appreciated by the 50-100 women per day who used it (Saito 2012:270). In fact, Enarson and Morrow's (1998) research after Hurricane Andrew found that women's collectivity led to an increase in feelings of political efficacy and personal empowerment. However, very little is known about positive change in women's sense of self after a disaster. This has also led to scepticism around the window of opportunity as a myth rather than a reality due to the lack of evidence of real and meaningful transformation in women's lives (Bradshaw 2001a; 2001b; 2002).

Women also engage in a lot of community and grassroots organising (Bari 1998; David 2012; Enarson et al 2007:138; GROOTS 2007). Organising can range from drawing on personal networks to formalised membership of a women's action group. For example, research has shown that for women in communities in Ecuador and Mexico, personal networks have important gendered wellbeing dynamics (Jones, Tobin, McCarty, Whiteford, Faas and Yepes 2014). Indeed, research based within a USA context suggests grassroots activism is often a result of existing female friendship networks (Neal and Phillips 1990). However, very little explores the relationships between women, both through their personal networks and how they relate to each other within collectives. Indeed, Enarson (2000a) notes that research on women coming to terms with disasters symbolically through engaging with cultural 'texts' has been neglected angle of vision (Enarson 2000a) and this is still the case today.

***Gender and Space***

Gender and disaster scholarship has and continues to have much to say about gender and space post-disaster, shedding light onto the power of collectivity and community, the increased burdens of care and responsibility in the home and space to simply be heard (Bradshaw 2014; Enarson et al 2007; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998; Wallace 1994). Traditionally, in order to pave the way for women to enter disaster discourse, the distinction between public and private space has been drawn upon to demystify the private sphere and bring issues such as IPV and the burden of care into

public discussion (Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:82). Disaster scholars have also been careful to avoid limiting discussion on gendered space to binary distinctions to include home, work and community as well as further space where these intersect in order to better reflect the complexities of lived realities (Moore Milroy and Wismer 1994 cited in Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:82). This means that different 'groupings' of capacities and vulnerabilities (as explored in depth by Blaikie et al 1994 in their Capacities and Vulnerabilities (CAV) model) create a different pre and post disaster space where some are better able to recover than others. Within this, gender has been found to be a key process and identity that significantly changes disaster spaces (Alway, Belgrave and Smith 1998; Enarson 2001c; Enarson and Morrow 1998). However, the professional sphere of disaster work, described by Phillips (1990) in her groundbreaking research as an "old boy's network" has meant that getting women space at the table at management and planning levels has been difficult to change (Enarson 2007:137).

Space for women to tell their stories so that gendered spaces can be better understood and catered for is an issue that gender and disaster scholars have placed great emphasis on early on because their experiences are rarely heard and this means that DRR could provide inappropriate results at best and ignore the interests of women at worst (Enarson and Morrow 1998:227; Wallace 1994:50, 53). Research by Fordham and Ketteridge' (1998) illustrates this point. The DRR management and planning focus is to rebuild homes and communities and physical structures and space which thus leads people 'home' and they can begin to rebuild their normal lives and recovery. However, viewing home and community as only physical space neglects the emotional and psychical space attached to home and community. For example, after homes were rebuilt, when women began filling that home with new possessions to replace those lost invoked sadness rather than joy (1998:90) demonstrating that rebuilding is more than replacing physical structures and is likely to need to be coupled with psychosocial support.

***Health and Mental Health***

Disaster research shows that there is a strong relationship between gender and health with women having particular gendered experiences post-disaster (Gault, Haartman, Jones-DeWeever, Werschkul and Williams 2005:11; Noel 1998:214; Ollenburger and Tobin 1998:102). Sexual and reproductive health issues arise specifically for women due to the stress and shock such as disrupted menstruation, issues with pregnancy and maternal mortality, increase in STIs, mental and psychological conditions and overall decline in wellbeing (Kelley and Greenbaum 2012; Noel 1998:214; Sapir 1992; Tockle 1994; WHO 2012). Women are also less likely than men to report health concerns post disaster generally, resulting in poor health and decreased mobility (Ollenburger and Tobin

1998:102). However, women are more likely to be responsible for the health of children and other dependents, such as elderly parents and relatives (Halverton 2004; Sultana; Enarson 2001b; Fothergill 2004).

This need not be the case as research also shows that where women are empowered at grassroots and community level, they are able to confidently take part in post-disaster health care, both informally and formally (Noel 1998:223). However, this 'taking part' often involves increased responsibilities for adult women as the task of community health then falls to them (Bradshaw and Viquez 2008). Not only could this additional responsibility increase the burdens for women but this burden could also impact their mental health and psychological wellbeing.

Very little space is opened up around mental health post disaster. This is interesting because there are a myriad of studies on PTSD post-disaster written from psychology disciplines, many specifically concern within psychology disciplines on children and adolescence and PTSD after disaster but very little seems to focus on gendered impacts (Van Griensven, Chakkraband, Thienkrua, Pengjuntr, Cardozo, Tantipiwatanaskul, Mock, Ekassawin, Varangrat, Gotway and Sabin 2006; Bokszczanin 2007; Green, Korol, Grace, Vary, Leonard, Gleser and Smitson-Cohen 1991; Neuner, Schauer, Catini, Ruf and Elbert 2006; Wickrama and Kaspa 2007; Yamashita and Shigemura 2013; Yule, Bolton, Udwin, Boyle, O'Ryan, and Nurrish 2003). PTSD is a contentious topic due to the specific checklist of symptoms and the psychological perspective where for PTSD to be diagnosed a set list of criteria must be met by the patient. This does not fully reflect the experiences of trauma and recovery.

Attention is now being paid to self-care for humanitarian and disaster relief workers (Bennet and Eberts 2015; Eriksen 2017; Min-Harris 2011; ReliefWeb 2016). This is a good thing as it is also draws attention to the trauma experienced by responders but self-care and support should be a space opened for all which includes but is not limited to staff in the field. For example, first-responders are often disaster survivors themselves (Gutman and Yon 2012) who are more likely than official responders to see the full and devastating effects of disaster on victims as well as experience the disaster as victims themselves.

The research that does exist on women's mental health post disaster suggests that there are specific issues resulting from surviving a disaster meaning that women have an increased "emotional workload" (Enarson and Scanlon 1999). For example, Tockle's research showed that adult women experienced an increase in fear of the disaster happening again, making them feel insecure about rebuilding their lives when the future is so uncertain (Tokle 1994). Women also worry about housing and home, supporting their

families, friends and communities to recreate a sense of home through every stage of disaster (Ashraf Shah 2012; Enarson and Scanlon 1999). All of these can contribute to women feeling insecure, concerned and fearful of their futures particularly if there is also the threat of another disaster.

***Stereotypes***

The gender neutral position traditionally operated in disasters from response to mitigation has had and continues to have far reaching consequences serving to reinforce gender stereotypes based on biological reductionism (Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:81). The media has been highlighted as a site where stereotypes and myths are perpetuated, painting negative portrayals of women. For example, research explored the representation of Saharawi women refugees by the media and found that they were portrayed as helpless, tearful victims in need of saving, with reference to Saharawi women by the media (Enarson and Meyreles 2004:49; Wallace 1994:50).

For example, Jolly (2004) discussing from a GAD perspective, highlights that along with the myth of woman as passive, emotional victims, men are constructed as idle, lazy drunkards. Like GBV, increase in alcohol consumption in males is not well-documented and can also be viewed as anecdotal. However, research exists that does support the increase in male alcoholism as a coping mechanism post-disaster (Ariyabandu 2006; De Alwis 2016; Jolly 2004; Khan 2010; Mishra 2009:31; Parkinson and Zara 2016; Wickrama and Kasper 2007). However, some research from a PTSD psychology perspective shows that adolescents including girls can resort to substance abuse as a way of coping with post-disaster trauma (Cahill, Beadle, Mitch, Coffey and Crofts 2010; Chemtob, Nomura, Josephson, Adams and Sederer 2009; Reijneveld, Crone, Schiller, Velhurst, Verloove-Vanhorick 2005; Rowe and Liddle 2008).

Stereotypes can be negative for both women and men, although in DRR where men are positioned as resourceful and sturdy (Enarson and Meyreles 2004:50) also provides men with the space to claim authority. This could be one of the reasons disaster management has been traditionally male dominated (Hewitt 1998; Bolin et al 1998; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Enarson et al 2007). Indeed, there has been an increase in attention to masculinities and an attempt to refocus on gender roles and relations between genders, not only women in isolation (Enarson and Pease 2016; Luft 2016). However, as noted by Bradshaw (2014) the research on men and masculinities presents them as complex whereas research on women positions them as objects and an overall lack of reflection on 'femaleness' (Bradshaw 2014:559).

Rather than being passive victims post-disaster, research has shown that women are already active in resilience and resourcefulness, particularly in community and grassroots organisations (Mulyasari and Shaw 2013; Noel 1998; Sharma, Kumar and Raja 2015; Wallace 1994:50,51). Research by Mehta (2009) in Northern India showed that where women are recognised, they are able to contribute with positive results (2009:67). Similarly research by Fordham (2009sb184) highlights that women who are trained in evacuation can challenge women's own notions of their capabilities and become "not just women" (Fordham 2009:184b). Fordham and Ketteridge's research also shows that facing multiple stresses can result in women having a more positive self-image by seeing themselves as strong (1998:90).This research demonstrates that whilst cultural mores are stubborn, they are not immutable (Mehta 2009:70). The key issue is that these strengths often go undocumented so that women's extraordinary strength and ability to cope is rarely at the forefront (Ahmed, Halim and Sultana 2012; Bradshaw 2013:67; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:90).

***Norms***

Norms can position women unequally in relation to men making them more vulnerable and invisibilising their voices. One of the most pervasive cultural norms regarding women and disasters centres on adult women's position to family and caregiving responsibilities alongside the assumption that women have a natural ability for altruism and caregiving. In fact, as highlighted above, disasters are often associated with an increase in caregiving responsibilities for women (Bradshaw 2013:568; 2009; Juran 2012).

A further issue with norms is that they can blanket over the complexities of 'female' roles such as elements of caregiving. For example, Noel (1998) highlights how women are often responsible for family food and nutrition in the Caribbean but that it is important not to view this responsibility as limited only to cooking and serving because it also involves direct manual labour in the form of crop harvesting, the handling of large farm animals, transport and marketing (1998:215). A further example is linked to women's caregiving roles within the home which is often cited in scholarship. However, what is not brought up often are the financial management skills women are required to undertake. This is linked to norms in post-disaster settings where it is the women who are often the ones standing in line to receive aid which also involves paperwork which is time consuming and in the USA context can involve aid-shaming from other members of communities (Enarson and Fordham 2001a; Fothergill 2003).

Linked to the notion of caregiving is also the belief around women's role in community and familial networks. These responsibilities can be exacerbated further after a disaster

where familial and community resources become less available (James, Tobin, McCarty, Whiteford, Murphy, Faas, and Yepes 2014).

Norms can also make women more vulnerable than men in the face of disaster. For example, women suffered greater loss of life after the 2004 Asian Tsunami due to cultural norms around traditional clothing (saris), female appearance (long hair that became caught in trees) and behaviour (girls were not taught to swim or climb trees) (Ariyabandu 2009). Female headed households and single mothers are also said to be disproportionately affected due to gender norms (Saad 2009; Tabora 2000). Rather than changing these practices, they are often reinforced or replaced with norms that continue to reinforce gender inequalities (Saad 2009). The return to normalcy often brings with it a return to subsidiary roles and secondary status (Wallace 1994:51). Research on elderly women post-disaster draws attention to the fact that such gender discriminative processes are exacerbated throughout the lifecourse and can ultimately create a poverty trap for women which is even more pernicious later in life (Gutman and Yon 2014; Ollenburger and Tobin 1998:101).

***Summary of What we 'Know'***

This body of work demonstrates that it is the inequalities of the everyday that contribute to risk and are the root causes of vulnerability to risk (Bradshaw 2014:570). That is, we must pay attention to the existing gendered power relations that create norms, behaviours and processes that discriminate against gender. Social systems are not gender neutral and as such, disasters will always unfold within complex relations of power (Enarson and Morrow 1997; Morrow 1997). Fordham called for disaster studies to move beyond the early focus of simply visibilising women in disasters towards recognising the complexities of everyday realities that have a vast impact on the way disasters are experienced (Fordham 1998). In gender and development circles it has already been significantly problematized in literature on the overreliance of development actors to exploit and operate on gender myths (Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead 2007b) and gender and disasters also points to the breaking down of these myths. In particular, it is not just gender that can be mythical but also around how the hazard is always conceptualised as the disaster when for some women in a community, their disasters may be very different (Mehta 2009:58).

**Gaps in Research in Gender Disasters**

Andrea Cornwall has been calling for feminist scholars working in gender and development to problematise "gender myths and feminist fables," exploring contradictions

and unpacking whose voices and choices are presented (Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead 2007a; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead 2007b. Cornwall 2003). As gender and development literature, often crosses over with disaster literature,[4] with the latter frequently being informed by GAD literature, some of these myths and fables will be explored here to highlight key gaps in gender and disaster research. This section will look at collective action and space, complexities of identities, particularly femininities and genders, same sex relationships and gender and class.

***Collectivity and Individualism***

'Traditional' feminist approaches like collectivity is often a 'go-to tool' to promote women's empowerment (Smyth 2007:147). There is nothing wrong with this per se, not least because collective space has long-been important for consciousness raising and positive change but investing in collective space is not the only way for women's wellbeing to be improved. In fact, in some cases, collective space 'invented' by DRR programmes can increase women's burdens and workloads with little direct benefit to women themselves, resulting in a feminisation of responsibility (Bradshaw 2014; 2013). However, gender research outside of development and disasters includes explorations on the importance of individual and personal space, exploring individualism, consumerism, popular media and self-care as potential vehicles for women to gain agency (Bordo 1999; Hollows 2000; Schweickart 1993; Taormino 2010; Whlelhan 2004:3; Williams 2002). Often, our myths are based on assumptions that adult women's gendered interests are the same for all women, including their girl children but this may not be the case in reality (Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2007:142).

Focusing on collectivity alone continues to perpetuate 'feminist myths' (Cornwall et al 2007b) that women are altruistic, natural caregivers but human beings have more experiences and relations than this. Whilst uncritically replacing collectivity with individualism is not helpful, it is important to understand how women do in fact gain agency through these processes. Individualism is not inherently bad because we are not simply 'consuming' passively but also negotiating, challenging and rewriting them (Ang 1996; Ferriss and Young 2006; Marina Gonick 1997; McRobbie 1991; Radway 1984). So whilst it is important to be critical of promotions of individualism and consumerism (Smyth 2007:147), these are problematic processes involving a complex negotiation of power relations, where individual time and space may in fact lead to positive transformation and change. For example, research about women watching TV novellas

[4] Much feminist work exists on the linkages between disasters and development (Anderson 1994; Bradshaw 2013; 2015; Kettel 1992). Whilst it is not the concern of this thesis to review this literature, it is important to acknowledge this body of work in order to draw on some of the key Gender and Development literature that is relevant to Gender and Disasters.

and reading women's magazines in India, Bangladesh and Kenya highlights that rather than passive consumers of misogynist media texts, women are claiming personal space away from household duties (Basu 2001; Gakahu, Mukongo and Lusike 2007; Rao 2001).

As feminist scholars, we may accidentally allow 'gender myths' to continue our focus on specific kinds of issues such as caregiving roles because we 'know' that these are often important to women. However, we may miss the importance of personal space as well as 'other' women who have equally important experiences but may be different. Enarson, Fothergill and Peek (2007) point to the need to 'de-link' women and children as a knowledge gap that could help to unpack myths about women's affinity to caregiving by simply asking, which women are we talking about? (2007:142). Here we can see strong links to Judith Butler's theoretical propositions around broadening our understandings of women as gendered categories so that we ask what we even mean when we 'utter' the category women. that is, we need to be clear about which women and what we mean by women.

***Complex Individuals: Identities***

Gender and disaster scholars have more recently suggested that men and masculinities need to be included into disaster practice because their identities also suffer negatively as a result of unequal gender relations (Mishra 2009; Enarson 2016; Parkinson and Zara 2016). Disaster impact on men is also uneven, for example single men and widowers are likely to experience difficulties (Mishra 2009:30). However, whilst men are constructed as complex individuals through these studies, the same space has not been created for women so that it appears little research exists taking the same consideration of the difficulties of femininities on women, preferring to continue to treat them still as objects (Bradshaw 2014:559).

Gender relations are just that: relational. They relate to other genders and they also relate to other identities such as class, race, ethnicity, age and sexuality (Ariyabandu 2009:6; Enarson 2001a; Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2007:143; Masai, Kuzenishi and Kondo 2009:132; Mehta 2009:58; Mishra 2009:30). However, those who do not 'fit' the stereotypical idea of a 'woman in disaster' have traditionally been invisible in popular disaster discourse due to their non-normative identities (Mehta 2009:63). For example, research shows that single women and widows have a different experience of disasters than women living in normative heterosexual family environments (Mehta 2009:64; Saad 2009:148). Further to this, Bradshaw and Linneker highlight that female-headed-households (FHHs) seem to fare better post-disaster than male-headed ones, partially due to recovery programmes directed at FHHs but also partially due to their relative autonomy (2009:81-83). This suggests that the absence of an authoritative male figure may be

positive for women's self-esteem but over and above this, they also allude to a potential issue where an elder son is present in the FHH (2009:84) which brings potential issues around power relations within a different gender relation. It is important to look inside households and how these households work by exploring processes such as negotiations of power (Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2007:142). Due to the fact that the gender relation between men and women has been considerably researched, it also emerged that attention needs to be paid to these other relationships: those between women and women; women and girls; men and men; men and boys and other intersections of identity (Weist et al 1994:54). Women's relationships with each other in terms of friendships can also be important outside of intimate relationships.

***Queer and LGBTQI Identities***

There is an important sexuality element that is inextricably linked to the process and identities of gender but in disasters, sexuality is often overly referred to implicitly through maternal and reproductive roles of adult women. However, emerging research on the area of disasters and sexualities highlights that this kind of heteronormative construction of sexuality is insufficient for understandings of gender minorities and cannot capture the realities of people's lives (Gaillard 2017a). There has been increasing interest in LGBTQI experiences post-disaster which are highly important as these draw attention to longstanding and historic heteronormativity in disaster policy and DRR but, as Gaillard et al (2017) warned, we need to be careful when using the 'LGBTQI' moniker as it does not provide space for the complete picture of queer experiences which are far more diverse. In fact, the 'I' is not always included and others use GLBT demonstrating the difficulty. For Gaillard et al (2017), the concern is around non-western gender identities and in this thesis, the concern is around queer representations of gender and sexualities that do not fit neatly into LGBTQI identity marker labels.

Sexuality can position women in risky and dangerous situations and an increase in women's precarious economic situation post-disaster has led scholars to warn about women being forced into sex work as well as sexual slavery and exploitation (Enarson and Fordham 2001b; Enarson and Phillips 2008; Wiest 1994). Further to this, non-normative sexualities such as LGBTQI sexualities can increase discrimination because of stigma attached to their non-binary identifications, particularly in non-western countries (Browne and Nash 2013). This is an emerging area of research that seeks to highlight how sexualities affect the experience of disaster (Browne and Nash 2013; Cianfarani 2013; D'Ooge 2008; Eads 2002; Gaillard et al 2017a; 2017b). This small body of research has suggested that LGBTQI people are more likely to face discrimination but also that they have unique capacities (D'Ooge 2008; Eads 2002; Gaillard 2017a). For example, queer-

identified women may be positioned as non-normative due to their same-sex partners. For example, D'Ooge's (2008) research about lesbian women's experience post-Katrina found that lesbian women struggled to gain access to relief services and found their relationships were not recognised by officials, demonstrating that lesbian identity and relationships placed them in a position of vulnerability and discrimination. However, as this is an emerging area of enquiry, researchers are calling for response to visibilise a wide and varied community who have traditionally not been considered in disasters (Dominey-Howes, Gorman-Murray and McKinnon 2014).

Furthermore, it is not only queer people's vulnerabilities that are marginalised but their capacities and resources too. For example, research by Gaillard et al (2017) highlighted how the 'Waria' of Indonesia, mostly biologically male but feminine in dress, appearance and often are associated with creative arts, hair and makeup salons, but not rigidly defined, drew on their skills as creative artists to set up makeshift salons in the camps after the eruption of Mount Merapi in 2010 to do peoples' hair and makeup. They also put on fundraising drag king shows to raise money for the camp occupants. This changed three crucial elements for both themselves and for the camp occupants. Providing lifestyle services addressed an often-lacking need in disaster camps for emotional, physical and soulful wellbeing. Secondly, they used their skills to raise much-needed money for the survivors, who had very little. And thirdly, it positioned a traditionally non-normative group among those who help others "get back to normal." This led to a greater understanding of Warias by the rest of society as well as demonstrates how what was first seen to be queer and at odds with normality, can, because of the space created by a disaster, come to be accepted and understood. However, they were never mentioned in DRR literature or anywhere else. This suggests that there are many more queer collectives who use their networks and skills to help others during times of crisis but as yet, little is known about them.

Within the realms of queer identities, lesbian, bisexual, trans people, pansexual and other queer identified women/people are situated and these identities describe many of the participants in this thesis. As such, it is important to continue to understand LGBTQI experiences but it is also important to move away from binary distinctions and engage with Gender Studies and queer theories (Gaillard et al 2017a). In this respect, gender and disasters needs to 'catch up' so that sexual identities can be explored more fully. For example, female same-sex relationships, whilst still intimate relationships should not be viewed through the same heteronormative lens as additional or different issues and events may occur, however, very little is known about how disasters might affect women's same-sex intimate relationships. During times of 'normalcy' many different events and

relations exists in female-same-sex relationships that are not the same as heterosexual relationships. For example, both may want to and have the biological capacity to give birth and then raise children. One partner might want to transition from female to male (F2M) and continue in their relationship as queer or as heterosexual, bringing up complex gender and sexuality discussions. One or both partners may not be "out" to anyone or only to some and particularly where this 'closetedness' is in relation to family and/or friends, can put extreme strain on relationships.

Whether the focus is around relationships, communities or individuals, it is clear that queer communities have unique needs and interests as well as capacities, strengths and vulnerabilities that need to be understood. When coupled together with youth identities, where it is understood that young people face specific challenges with sexualities themselves, even less is known about their experiences.

***Gender and Class***

Gender is known to intersect significantly with class (David and Enarson 2012; Finlay 1998; Fordham 1998; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998; Fothergill and Peek 2004). Social deprivation, which results in a lack of choice and access to resources have been particularly well-documented in relation to poverty and development (Bradshaw 2014; 2004; 2002; Fordham and Ketteridge 1999:84). That said, studies on gender and class were relatively rare even though the studies that do exist highlight class to be a significant organising factor in experiencing disaster (Enarson et al 2007). A significant game changer here was the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina which not only brought the stark contrast of class into the forefront but also highlighted how gender and class intersected explicitly with race in Katrina experiences (David and Enarson 2012). Whilst race and ethnicity differences had been documented before (Fothergill, Maestas and Darlington 1999; Blanchard and Boeham 1997; Enarson and Fordham 2001), Katrina revealed deep-seated cultural and social discriminations in a country that at the time, was considered powerful, progressive and developed.

Little research exists on the experiences of higher social classes such as middle and upper middle classes gendered experience of disaster (David 2012). Whilst affluent women may have access to resources to physically escape and recover from disaster, the emotional impacts can still be distressing (Enarson and Fordham 2001; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:84; Fothergill 2004; Hoffman 1998). Further, specific cultural interactions can also limit middle and upper classes differently. For example, when flood warnings were issued in India, high caste women were not able to leave the family home due to the restrictions of purdah (Ahmed 2005).

***In Summary***

A review of the gender and disaster literature points to the early research recognising the complexities within gender, but also at the time focussing on the need to draw attention to women in general to address a gender neutral and masculinised disaster space that did not take women into account at all. Indeed, Fordham and Ketteridge (1998:94). highlighted this perfectly, stating that whilst they recognise the more specific experiences of 'other' women such as disabled women and older women, the focus must be to draw attention to the fact that women as a category have different experiences than men and these must be recognised.

The suggestions about the different kinds of experiences different kinds of women face with different relationships in their lives post-disaster goes far beyond the husband/wife relation and far beyond the experiences of children and adult women and men. A key knowledge gap then is situated within the need to explore disasters through the lens of embodied social actors which recognises all people, not just women as having multiple and fluid identities and interests (Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2007:141). Whilst this thinking requires a consideration of people, it is also worth noting that a focus on women is still necessary due to continued constraints and discriminations that render many women in positions of inequality. The more recent line of enquiry in disasters regarding masculinities does allow space for research into femininities though. Indeed, Bradshaw reflecting on the state of the research into gender and disasters highlights that rather than showing that women are 'empowered' at the expense of men during post-disaster recovery, studies continue to show the suffering of women so that the gender focus on women is still justified (Bradshaw 2015:567). Exploring differences can illuminate vulnerabilities and capacities and how different women experience disaster. After all, some differences can be life-saving in the same vein that other differences can be life threatening (Enarson, Fothergiill and Peek 2007:143).

Due to gender and disaster scholarship in the 1990s, it can now be said that at least at the surface level, women's needs are recognised post disaster. Now that women are seen as a category with specific needs post-disaster, scholarship began explorations of the complexities and differences between women in order to gain a richer picture of post-disaster experiences. The goal now is to better reflect the lived realities of women's lives in relation to other social and cultural markers as well as in relation to other gender categories. Gaps in knowledge continue to exist within intersectionalities, particularly age, stage in lifecourse and sexualities. In part, young women may be seen as non-normative due their lack of childcare responsibilities and lack of actually being children themselves and queer-identified women may be positioned as non-normative due to their same-sex

partners. Female same-sex relationships, whilst still intimate relationships should not be viewed through the same heteronormative lens as additional or different issues and events may occur, for example where one partner chooses to transition from M to F or where the relationship is polyamorous. Further to this, women's relationships with each other in terms of friendships can also be important outside of intimate relationships.

# Chapter 7: Young Women, Teenage Girls and Disasters

Young women and teenage girls can face unique vulnerabilities and possess unique capacities after a disaster. In terms of vulnerabilities, this is partly because in many societies, discrimination against girls and women is deep-seated and reproduced by socio-economic, political and cultural norms, which perpetuate their vulnerability and essentially disadvantage them from birth throughout their lives to different degrees (IFRC 2011:52; Green 2012; Ollenburger and Tobin 1998; Tanner 2010). As such, research into young women's experiences could help to further explore the discriminatory practices that place them at greater risk in the future. That said, girls and young women also possess unique capabilities but because of these deep-seated stereotypes and norms, teenage girls and young women may not recognise their capacities and strengths as valuable. At present, there is very little research on 'growing up' post-disaster to discuss how gendered processes of discrimination might affect teenage girls and young women differently from adult women when they experience a disaster and even less that takes into account the changes and temporality of gender through 'growing up.'

**Adolescent/Teenage Girls, Young Women and Disasters**

Age is one aspect that has been noted by researchers as a process that changes the experience of gender identities, roles and responsibilities in disasters (Ariyabandu 2009:9; Mishra 2009:32). Age is identified by Mehta (2009) as a factor in increasing the vulnerability of infants, children and the elderly (2009:200). Indeed, there is a small body of work on aging and disasters (Eade and Williams 1994; Ollenburger 1992; Ollenburger and Tobin 1998; Tobin and Ollenburger 1992). Teenage girls and young women though are neither children nor adults but tend to be subsumed into the narratives of one or both and have rarely appeared as a category in their own right with unique needs and interests specific to their cohort. As a result, there is a lack of knowledge around how young women and teenage girls experience a disaster and why their experiences might differ from those of adult women or children.

Most programmes have been blind to the intersection of youth and gender and very few contain the specifics of both as an area of inquiry (Tanner 2010; Coalition for Adolescent Girls 2012b:4). However, girls, particularly adolescent girls have become a focus in disaster practice and research. In fact, women as well as girls are now seen to be the key to resilience (UNISDR 2012) which saw a shift in focus to get adolescent girls on the table of

DRR, seen explicitly in 2013 when Plan International took adolescent girls and disasters as their yearly theme via their ongoing 'Because I Am A Girl' (BIAAG) Campaign. Adolescent girls can now be seen as a distinct category in development circles which is trickling down into disasters as well. However, as touched on above, the focus on 'adolescence' as a stage in life course and time-stamping this stage as a category thereby falling into the trap of linking girls to reproductive roles.

**Key issues in the discourse on 'adolescent' girls**

The fact that adolescent girls are entering disaster discourse can be seen as a 'good' thing because this means different life stages are being recognised as having different needs and interests to adults as well as removing adolescent girls from the larger category of children which does not recognise gender. However, there are three key issues in the discourse on adolescent girls that will be problematised here. Firstly, the roots of the term 'adolescence' may link girls to their maternal and reproductive capacity through its biological uses and therefore invisibilise other important concerns. Secondly, the biological and psychological aspects that are thought to define adolescence restrict this stage in life course and do recognise different experiences across life courses that change through intersecting processes and identities. Thirdly, because adolescent girls in disasters is a relatively 'new' category, only those engaging with these terms in literature are visible despite the fact that earlier work on gender and disasters makes reference to young women and teenage girls' specific experiences in addition to work such as this study that does not itself choose to engage with the same terminology.

Since around 2010, a 'new' category of women's lifecourse has entered disaster discourse via development scholarship: the adolescent girl (Tanner 2010; Plan 2013). Sociologically speaking, adolescence is a problematic term with roots to psychological approaches and medical and biological. Because 'adolescence' is linked to bio-psychology and therefore connected to particular biological stages in life, such as puberty, menstruation and childbirth, we remain attached to the image of women and now girls as naturally linked to their reproductive sexualities. The term adolescent thus links girls to their potential reproductive and maternal roles. Girls are not simply future mothers and conceptualising them as adolescents may fall into the trap of reducing gender to traditional and stereotypical roles. Where youth is becoming increasingly extended not just in western countries but all over the world as a result of processes like globalization and extended life, women under 30 may not identify with the stereotypical concerns of 'adult' women and may prefer to relate closer to 'youth' than maturity. Youth and young adult may then be more fluid and less clear-cut terms to work with.

Whilst adding a category within women called “adolescent girls” does expand the category of women and take into account the intersectionality of specific ages with gender, the term ‘adolescent’ can also serve to uphold stereotypes and norms rather than destabilise. This is because the term ‘adolescent’ has strong roots in bioscience and bio-psychology where adolescence is explicitly connected to sexual development and reproduction (Green 2010). Linking girls with adolescence then can bring them closer to reproductive sexuality that is rigidly defined.

Continuing to connect ‘adolescent’ girls to female roles such as reproduction can increase the chances that adolescent girls are thought of in a caregiving and community capacity (See Robinault 1990 cited in Enarson and Morrow 1998:226).. As Delaney and Shrader (2000) warn over the sinister co-benefits attached to reasoning institutions to become gender responsive, the same discourse can be heard as justification for the inclusion of adolescent girls such as within Tanner’s work (2010). An issue here is thus highlighted around the fact there appears to be a need to link gender inclusion to co-benefits as if including girls and young women for their own sake and in their own right is not enough to get them onto the table. The ‘women as tools’ discourse now included in gender responsive DRR and development initiatives (Bradshaw 2013; 2014; Chant 2016a; 2016b; Pearson 2000) may do very little to positively transform the lives, of girls and young women as individuals because their interests are not the goal.

Young women face even further invisiblisation because they are neither girl nor adolescent girl, or woman. This is especially so in terms of gendered needs and interests. They are non-normative in a disaster sense because of their lack of children and childcare responsibilities and through not being children themselves. This links to sexuality and how sexuality is very much restricted to the maternal for women and girls. Maternity can be seen to be a biological process, but it is not without cultural input as there are many culturally specific norms attached, such as assumptions around childcare and ‘natural’ instincts to nurture. Some suggestions are made with reference to sexuality in terms of maternity, health and disease (Akwara et al 2003; Coutsoudis et al 2001; Kissinger et al 2007; Petchesky 2008; 2000;  Pittaway et al 2007; Smith 2004; Spiegel 2004) but very little focus exists.

Secondly, some disciplines suggest that adolescence is a clearly defined life stage related explicitly to biology therefore excluding the contentions and ambiguities of growing up as a process. For example, when exactly does one emerge from girl-child to adolescent girl? From an adolescence definition this would include first menstruation but if first menstruation is at 9 years of age does that suggest sufficient maturity to no longer be

referred to as a child? If taking stark biological views that first menstruation reads as sexual maturity then surely this also reads like a justification for gender oppressive practices such as child marriage. The above is a rather reductive anecdote to draw on but the point is that biological changes associated with adolescence should be discussed with caution. Indeed, The American Academy of Paediatrics (2003) states that adolescence can be viewed in three key stages (demarcated by age) alongside seven developmental transitions that include psychological and social development that cannot be so easily demarcated by specific age within the range but they do view adolescence to begin at the minimum age of 11 and reach to a maximum age of 21 (cited in HealthyChildren.Org 2015).

Sociologists working on youth studies in general prefer terms like 'teenagers' and 'young adults' that bypasses any links to biological and psychological development and also allows more scope for difference (Green 2010). This thesis also discusses young people in these terms, using the descriptors of teenage girls and young women also noting the contention between where there is a transition from one to the other.

Thirdly, there are also some issues around discourses. Whilst there is a body of work that refer to adolescent girls in their own right (See for example Tanner 2010), there are also four further bodies of work that make reference to girls and young women that whilst both or either category is made reference to, is not the purpose of the research and does not form a specific focus. The Coalition for Adolescent Girls (2012a; 2012b) suggests that doing this may have contributed to their unique concerns being overshadowed. That said, a careful and detailed review of prior gender and disaster scholarship could reveal key areas for attention by drawing out what is alluded to about teenage girls and young women in existing gender and disaster work.

Five broad trends have thus been identified in this thesis: girls as adults; girls as children; women AND girls; young women as adult women; and girls in their own right. Where girls are made reference to within research about adult women, their specific needs can be subsumed even though their needs are different (See for example Ishrad et al 2012). The same can be said when they are grouped together with research on children (see for example Fothergill and Peek 2008) and as 'add-ons' to women (See for example Ariyabandu 2009:8; Mehta 2009:62; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:86; Saad 2009:144-45). A handful of researchers have drawn attention to specific experiences of young women in broader research about women (See Bradshaw and Linneker 2009:82; Bradshaw 2002; 2001; Saad 2009:144-45). All of the research above, shows that young women and teenage girls are likely to have different needs and interests but that more targeted research about their experiences as they grow up after a disaster is needed to fully understand these needs and interests.

In summary, what is normative remains untouched because nature is left unexamined. This thesis takes a queering gender analysis approach to unpack normativity around young women's experiences post-disaster, showing that what is thought to be 'natural' and normal may not necessarily provide the space young women need to empower themselves.

**What we know about adolescent/teenage girls and young women**

This section will explore selected gender and disaster scholarship from all five trends described above to highlight some key differences in how young women and teenage girls experience the effects of a disaster (Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:86; Ishrad et al 2005; Rashid and Michaud 2000; Saad 2009;).

Ishrad et al provide some excellent insights into the experience of disability in relation to the 2005 Pakistan Earthquake through qualitative interviews with women aged from 16 years upwards. Whilst including adolescent girls and young women, the research defines their needs and interests homogenously with adult women. This highlights how even where one could say young women are 'included' they are invisibilised by the broader category of women. This is apparent within the findings. Despite very interesting findings around the social, emotional and financial isolation of paraplegic women after the Pakistan earthquake, many were presented in terms of adult women issues. For example, marital distrust, violence and abuse were highlighted as common themes amongst the sample. However, even though child marriage is practiced in countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh (UNICEF 2012), this rate is reducing and it is also unlikely that all the girls in the group under 19 years would be married and thus not suffer abuse by a marital partner but would face separate issues such as those sibling relations identified in the work of Rashid and Michaud (2002) and Saad (2009). Indeed it is already briefly highlighted that the Pakistani earthquake impacted some young women differently precisely because they were unmarried (Saad 2009). Young women living with their mothers who were subsequently killed post-disaster had to rely on their married siblings, particularly to survive because they were not automatically entitled to life insurance (Saad 2009). This is different from the experiences of children who would not be living independently and from married adult women. Even in marriage, young widows may face different issues to their 'older'/ adult counterparts around things such as extended family relationships. For example, economic issues could affect marriage prospects but could also alter other aspects of their lives and their futures such as sibling relations, friendships, sense of self and self-esteem. These relationships are still gendered but operate outside of the husband/wife relation that all too often dominates our thinking around gender relations. Saad's research pointed to young unmarried women facing discrimination in obtaining

any compensation for the death of parents and being forced into living with extended family members with no means of independent financial support (Saad 2009:148). What is also quite interesting about this finding is that young women and older women may face similar issues in terms of stigmatisation but that the feelings and consequences may be different but as both groups are relatively unexplored, very little is known.

Young women are even further marginalized in these discourses as they are neither mentioned nor defined as distinct. However, we know from small suggestions within larger research projects that young women have different concerns to adult women and therefore will possess different capabilities and vulnerabilities suggesting that feelings of fear of the future, health, marriage, family and intimate relationships are different to adult women (Anderson and Woodrow 1998; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009:82; Saad 2009:93,148; Saito 2012). For example, following the East Japan Earthquake young women felt increased fear about the effect of radiation on their reproductive health and the possibility of marriage discrimination in the future (Saito 2012:272). Furthermore, where opportunity is opened up to young women and girls post disaster it can have a positive effect on their lives. For example, research by Anderson and Woodrow (1998:67) demonstrates how an NGO in Africa chose to employ educated young women from the community rather than employ 'outsiders' for a disaster relief programme enhancing education opportunities for younger girls. This provided the young women they employed with economic agency and independence and provided the girls they taught with better education opportunities. It also helped to instil cultural change by increasing the value placed on girl's education when previously, girl's education was not valued.

Fothergill and Peek's study on under 18's post-Hurricane Katrina (2008) begins to open up the field for more research into the lives of young people. They draw attention to the fact that there is little understanding about how the disaster process affects young people's lives, relationships and overall wellbeing (2008:4). This statement is highly significant because it draws attention to the fact young people's lives are significant and that their relationships and wellbeing are important factors to understand in order for them to be properly recognised in disaster work. However, little research exists on young adults and in this research young adults are discussed as children, highlighting the need to draw attention to any specific needs they might have relating to them being 'older' than children but younger than adults.

Reports and research began to highlight that adolescent girls will have age *and* gender related vulnerabilities and capacities that are unique to their cohort, but before this, teenage girls received very little attention (Tanner 2010; Greene, Cardinal and Goldstein-Siegel 2012; Coalition for Adolescent Girls 2012a; 2012b). Tanner's work also draws

attention to an age-old issue on women's inclusion in development. It is often not for their benefit per se and Tanner cites a number of "co-benefits" to sell the importance of including adolescent girls into development (Tanner 2010:5). This can be seen in the recent campaign by Nike, "The Girl Effect" problematised for the same reason by Chant in gender and development circles (2016a). These "co-benefits" are very much alike to the concerns over adult women's inclusion in disasters and Development projects highlighted earlier by feminist scholars in the field (Bradshaw and Linneker 2009). Inclusion then may not necessarily be a 'good' thing (Bradshaw 2015).

Observations about young women in wider gender studies research suggests that young women are a group with specific interests and in need of further exploration. For example, research on gender relations between adult women and men within the household post-Mitch identified that young women living with a male partner were the least likely group of women to be engaged in income-generating activities and were also afforded the least personal freedom (Bradshaw and Linneker 2009:82; Bradshaw 2002; 2001).

Research by Doppler (2009) after the Asian Tsunami in Sri Lanka from the perspective of parents and adults focussed on gender-based violence (GBV) and found that parents talked about specific worries relating to teenage daughters that affected their 'choice' of emergency housing (Doppler 2009:108). This raises questions around the importance family members place on young women's age and sexuality and draws attention to the need to look at other gender relations between father and daughter, mother and daughter and how these identities affect post-disaster experiences, decisions and lives, previously emerging in gender and development literature (Cornwall 2003).

To date, the most comprehensive study about young women, sexualities and disaster remains to be Rashid and Michaud's (2000). However, the study does not specifically frame the participants as young women but rather as adolescent girls. Their focus on honour, shame, purity and pollution during the 1998 Bangladesh floods is one of the only studies also exploring gender and sexuality for youth in a post-disaster setting. Their study highlights the complexity of adolescent girls' and young women's post-disaster experiences drawing out the vulnerabilities and capacities that were unique to this cohort. They faced specific issues related to their gender, age and class which were exacerbated by pre-existing cultural and social norms such as fear of male violence and negotiating menstruation (2000:54,67). Relationships between women are also interesting to explore. For example In the Middle-East, Saad notes that mothers pass their knowledge of sustainable living to their daughters through storytelling (2009:93). Exploring the relationships between young women and teenage girls with one or both of their parents are crucial to understand how families respond to disaster. For example, parental

concerns were raised around their daughters' reputations after the 1998 Pakistan Floods and the 2004 Asian Tsunami (Rashid and Michaud 2000:57; Doppler 2009:108). These fears can be passed on to the girls themselves and may play a part in unequal gendered power relations; but we do not know. We also do not know whether things change for young women as they grow up after a disaster in unexpected ways around the decisions, choices and processes that emerge.

Indeed, the study showed that the anxiety around these norms post-disaster had far-reaching implications on the girls' health, identity, family and community relations. The freedom bestowed on them in the public sphere meant that the girls also benefitted from a dry place to sleep, support from superiors, and somewhere to have their own space (Rashid and Michaud 2000:60, 63). This research indicates that girls face specific vulnerabilities but that they also have resourcefulness and resilience and found solidarity in coping, for example, they relied on each other and male family members to help them gain access to privacy to carry out their daily activities (Rashid and Michaud 2000:61). The findings of Rashid and Michaud (2000) demonstrate that adolescent girls and young women are likely to have specific vulnerabilities and capacities post-disaster directly related to their age, gender and sexualities but also that these specific vulnerabilities and capacities have remained unexplored until almost a decade later where the focus on adolescent girls has increased and entered the mainstream (Coalition for Adolescent Girls 2012b; Plan International 2013; Tanner 2010).

**Teenage Girls and Young Women as the Gap in Research**

Growing up after a disaster is different from times of normalcy because the normal events considered to be part of growing up are disrupted. Gender and disaster research also shows that there is an increase in family tension, an increase in the fear of violence, a decrease in employment that affects women differently and often a reliance on gender norms, particularly those of female caregiving that can increase the burden faced by women (Ariyabandu 2009; 2006; 2005; Bradshaw 2015; 2013; 2004; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Enarson and David 2012; Enarson and Chakrabarti 2009; Enarson and Meyreles 2004). All of this is likely to impact young women as they grow up, but as yet little is known about their experiences. The lives and experiences of young people (Fothergill and Peek 2008) and within this, the gendered experiences of young women have been particularly neglected in disaster research.

Even though the voices of women have entered disaster scholarship, there are still areas that need attention because disasters are gendered processes that intersect with other

identities producing different experiences (Bolin et al 1998:28; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Enarson and David 2012). Rather than resting on their laurels of getting gender 'in,' many gender and disasters scholars have remained highly critical of these processes so that we never forget there is still a long way to go. This had led to discussions over what 'inclusion' really means (Bradshaw 2015) and an 'unpacking' of the notion and descriptive category of 'woman' (Ariyabandu 2007; AWID 2010; Bradshaw 2004) in order to explore people's experiences of disaster beyond the structures of normal, everyday life (Hewitt 1983) as well as how everyday processes and relationships do not disappear after a disaster but can in fact be altered. As young women are already seen to be in a stage of "first times" the combination of disruption to normality and the lifecourse stage to make new decisions may collide.

As we have seen above, youth can be unintentionally subsumed into adulthood or 'genderless' children and this is problematic for understanding the impacts of disasters. This is because young people have different concerns to those of adults and furthermore, their experiences are gendered. Indeed, the little research that does exist shows that young women and teenage girls have specific concerns but much more needs to be understood. Teenage girls and young women have concerns that may sometimes coincide with those of children and adults but also should be considered as categories in their own rights with unique interests and needs that are specific to their cohorts. Teenage and young adulthood is marked by processes of change and transition alongside increasing autonomy to make their own decisions and as such it is important to try to understand trends that mark changes that might create a demarcation between these experiences where these changes can affect how disasters are experienced. Indeed, this is precisely what sets young women and teenage girls apart in that the psychosocial space they occupy is defined by its shifting. One particular aspect that defines young women's growing up is their changing relationships with others. As such, this study has considered whether and how a disaster changes young women's experiences within intimate relations and decisions.

Key themes have emerged specifically around youth, gender and female sexuality suggesting that when these three identities intersect after a disaster, different concerns are created, setting young women apart from both adult women and children. Relationships with others may be particularly important here and a useful window in to looking at 'other' gendered relations outside of the gendered relationship between husband/wife, such as female friendships, child/parent relationships, sibling relationships and female same sex relationships that may be crucial for understanding how youth, and

young women in particular, cope and grow up after a disaster. Contributing to this small body of work is important in order to understand how and why youth and gender impact the disaster experience. Whilst issues such as GBV and poverty must continue to be addressed, so must the axes of age to avoid any misrepresentation of young women's unique needs and interests to better understand the complex gendered experiences of unequal power relations both before and after a disaster.

**A 'New' Story**

This thesis builds on the literature within contemporary gender and disaster research that has drawn attention to the need for 'other' voices such as sexual minorities, youth and varying abilities (Fothergill and Peek 2008; Gaillard et al 2017a; Gaillard et al 2017b; Ishrad et al 2010). Gender is recognised as a contributing factor to post-disaster recovery, but inclusion still tends to focus on women as caregivers or in the case of adolescent girls, girls as a way to channel resources to their families (Enarson and Meyreles 2004).

In order to pay attention to young women as 'youth' voices, this research seeks to move away from the relatively new focus on 'adolescent' girls (Coalition for Adolescent Girls 2012b; Tanner 2010). This is because adolescence as a term is too rooted in biopsychology which draws natural links to maternity and reproduction but does not visibilise a range of sexualities or expressions of sexualities, including gender identities which means that it falls into the realms of heteronormativity. Furthermore, adolescence is a clearly defined stage in lifecourse, again dictated by biophysical change to the body, particularly around puberty and does not reflect the current literature within youth studies around extended youth nor does it allow young women themselves to define their own stage in lifecourse. As such, this study engages with the terms teenage girls and young women.

Research within gender and sexualities emerging from Gender Studies and Queer Theory highlights that sexual and gender identities are important aspects of young women's lives, often involving 'first time' decisions under times of 'normalcy' and thus, gender and sexuality will be considered alongside youth to explore how young women are impacted by disaster. The study seeks to explore the 'abnormal' time of disaster as a new space where young women must negotiate their identities within pre-existing processes and relationships as well as new ones that did not exist in times of normalcy.

The study engages with a "queering" and feminist approach to the research with the goal to avoid a heteronormative bias. To do this, the study has turned the gender lens toward youth and sexuality as well as gender to tell the stories of young women and how they themselves view their identities as they grew up post-Katrina, particularly by taking into

account the stories of young women who would be defined by heteronormativity as 'non-normative' due to their sexualities and/or their gender identities. Queer is also used an umbrella term to capture multiple sexual and gender identities that do not fall neatly into the 'LGBTQI' identity marker approach with an explicit focus on non-assimilation but rather understanding difference as part of 'normal' life. Thus the study aimed to explore whether and how young women negotiate gender and sexual identities particularly around life decisions linked to gender and sexual identities in times of crisis and as they 'got back to normal.' One of the ways in which young women's identities is explored is through 'drag king' performance art as an explicitly visually queer site of expression. What queering does is 'play' with these arguments and creates or draws attention to ways of seeing and being in the world from another or an "other" position to show that lived realities fit more into a spectrum than they do into binary distinctions of male/female; straight/gay; or within identity markers of LGBTQI. Mainstream cultures play a significant role in policing the boundaries of what and who are seen as acceptable, often fencing these boundaries with limits to appropriate 'gender' behaviours (Bordo 1993; Covino 2004; Coward 1994; Gill 2007; Hollows 2000; McRobbie 2004; Roberts 2007). As disasters disrupt society and culture, new space might be opened up to explore 'something new.' The subcultures some of the young women participate in, such as drag king performance art are thus important spaces of enquiry in this research, particularly in terms of looking at collective action as well as queer space and how collective space can change women's experiences as well as individual space.

Becoming a woman is seen by feminist scholarship as a struggle and gender identity is seen as a set of acts and behaviours that we do, that is, we learn how to be 'female' and may never achieve 'proper' heterosexual femininity (Rubin 1975; Connel 2007; Rose 2005). However, what is also recognised, particularly through queer theory is that the 'art' of doing gender does not necessarily create unified categories of women and men. Rather, we can explore how people 'do' gender, whether this is through performance art or in everyday life and discover and reveal that there are more gendered 'categories' to consider that are informed by a myriad of identities (Braidotti 2002; Cixous 1979; Yuval-Davis 2006). Following on from Butler (1991) sex and gender are seen as a 'sex-gender continuum' where it is important to ask what is meant by women, what these experiences are, whether different intersections of identities with gender mean women have different experiences of disaster and also specifically to look at the relational differences of women, not just to men but also to each other. Indeed, binaries, along with identity marker movements, normativity and stereotypes will always create a hierarchy between the two as well as exclude everything else.

In order to remove the invisibility cloak around the importance of the intersections of gender with youth and sexualities, this takes a queering gender analysis approach to unpack normativity around young women's experiences post-disaster, showing that what is thought to be 'natural' and normal may not necessarily provide the space young women need to empower themselves. However, the study also recognises the problematic nature of women and indeed girls' inclusion in development-led gender and disaster policy and approaches (Bradshaw 2014; Chant 2016a). Traditionally, in DRR, certain characteristics have become naturalised when gender/women is evoked. Research indicates that it is often assumed in disaster terms that women are naturally altruistic, caring and maternal (Bradshaw 2001a; 2001b; 2002; Delaney and Shrader 2000). As with Chant's recent critique of the rapid interest in adolescent girls in development (Chant 2016a), the genuineness of this commitment to 'step up' for women and girls is more likely to be linked to the "co-benefits" of inclusion, where responsibilities are increased but meaningful change does not occur. Therefore, there is a particular focus on understanding not only whether young women have 'traditional' gender concerns post-disaster but also to reveal that these 'other' women have 'other' needs, problematising the very notion of visibility. In order for there to be real change (Cornwall 2007), feminist scholars must be wary of our own myths and fables (Cornwall et al 2007a) which include the notion of women as caregivers, albeit resourceful and resilient, as well as the overwhelming focus on adult women and where needed, bring in new voices that represent the diversity of lived experiences post-disaster. The overarching goal of this study is to draw out the interests of young women who have reflected on what it was like to grow up after Katrina showing that their concerns, whilst at times aligned to traditional gender concerns post-disaster, are often interpreted very differently, alongside concerns, needs and interests that are unique to their cohort and specifically informed by their stages in lifecourse.

# PART FOUR

# BACKGROUND

## Chapter 8: What Katrina Did: A Background to the Study

*"Water isn't shaped like a river or ocean; it mists invisibly against metal and glass."*

(Angelou 1994)

### The Katrina Story – A Snapshot in Time

Hurricane Katrina has become known as one of the worst disasters in history, causing unprecedented economic damage and bringing an entire city to a standstill without access to infrastructure or basis services (Laska and Morrow 2006; Jenkins and Phillips 2008). It is not surprising then that the magnitude of Katrina has led scholars to point out that there is no going "back to normal" for the survivors of Katrina (Jenkins and Phillips 2008). For the participants of this study though, what was normal life was not necessarily a positive space. For others though, normal life was about re-establishing 'queer' space. Normality has been a concept that has been problematised throughout the thesis and in this Chapter, it will be problematised further in relation to the contentious position of New Orleans culturally, socially and geographically so that it is seen as a 'gay haven' of the south as well as a city that has a poor history for standing up for minority rights.

Katrina touched down on 29th August 2005 at 6am after a warning period was issued just five days before (Thornton and Voigt 2007). Like all disasters, affected individuals, families and communities who were evacuated, displaced, lost homes and loved ones and had to try to recover their lives afterwards. However, Katrina did not happen in a vacuum. As well as revealing stark inequalities, particularly across race and class, Katrina was the catalyst in a multi and prolonged impact event which included multiple storm surges, multiple levee breaches from the two rivers that engulf New Orleans as well as a chemical explosion and massive oil spill, finishing off with Hurricane Rita (Thornton and Voigt 2007). As suggested by gender and disaster researchers, disaster events are often multiple,

involving the 'disaster within the disaster' and 'secondary disasters' making the post-disaster situation highly complex (Bradshaw 2014).

Research exploring personal accounts suggests that the events of Katrina had a life changing effect. With phrases like 'Pre-K' and 'Post-K' entering popular culture, it is also clear that there really is no going back to life before Katrina and that the worlds of the survivors as they pick up the pieces will be forever changed. However, little research has explored what it is like to emerge from disaster in the long term, that is, the 'post' post-disaster.

## Missing Intersections

Hurricane Katrina has become a 'good' example of what a 'natural' disaster does by destabilising the assumption that it is a natural event that causes disastrous effects. Across the southern states of the USA, Hurricane Katrina killed people across class, race, ethnicity and gender lines. However, a far greater number of people survived but in this survival were displaced from their homes, communities and livelihoods for at least a month, some forever (Thornton and Voigt 2007). Even though disasters do not discriminate, pre-existing power relations around position in society, access to resources and distribution of income mean that some are more likely to recover from disaster than others. This inequality and lack of rights is unmasked by the disaster (Enarson 1998b:8). Disasters can thus be seen as social events that unmask the inequalities, vulnerabilities and capacities and resources people use to negotiate the "permanent disaster" of daily life (Masker 1989 cited in Enarson and Morrow 1998:1; Militia et al. 1975; Dynes et al. 1987). Furthermore, what is even less well known after a disaster is how young people's lives, relationships and well-being are affected by these processes (Fothergill and Peek 2008).

Gender inequality is recognised as a root cause of vulnerability in disaster scholarship generally and one that must be addressed by fully engaging women as resourceful community actors (Enarson 1998c:26). Unsurprisingly then, gender was highlighted as a crucial area of concern from very early on after Katrina with women's research centres, NGO's and organisations raising a call for attention to gender concerns, particularly intersectional gender concerns (Youth Breakout; INCITE 2005; See NWSA Special Issue on gender 2008, 20:3: Katrina and the politics of displacement; Kates, Colten, Laska and Leatherman 2006; Willinger 2008). However, feminist research went untapped, despite the efforts of feminists and women's organisations who tried to draw attention to difference (D'Ooge 2008; Enarson and David 2012; Enarson and Phillips 2008; INCITE 2007). This led prominent gender and disaster scholar, Elaine Enarson to raise the concern

that Katrina response was taking a "huge" step back from all of the achievements of gender and disaster scholarship to date where at least partial inclusion of the 'women as caregivers'/ 'women and children' paradigms was recognised in DRR (Enarson and David 2012).

Whilst little was tapped in the USA policy and practice context, much has been learnt by Hurricane Katrina in scholarly research. Feminist researchers continued to raise their voices and new insights emerged regardless of invisibilisation and the intersections of race and class were particularly well-documented by feminist scholars including issues such as economic wealth, low-income employment, responsibility for childcare, female-headed households and exposure to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) (IWPR 2010; Gault et al 2005:1; Greeley and Planned Parenthood of Louisiana and The Mississippi Delta 2008; Harville, Taylor, Tesfai, Xiong and Buekens 2011; Henrici 2010; Jenkins and Phillips 2008; Laska et al 2008; Thornton and Voigt 2007; Willinger 2008; Willinger with Gerson 2008)

Young women were doubly invisiblised by this as Katrina literature on women focussed very much on adult women and children. Some literature emerged on the intersection of gender with age but this literature was mostly in terms of children and older women (Jaycox et al 2010; Lawson and Thomas 2007; Salloum and Overstreet 2008; Scheeringa and Zeanah 2008; Scheeringa, Salloum, Arnberger, Weems, Amaya-Jackson and Cohen 2007; Sharkey 2007). Therefore, young women, especially those without children were missing from the discussion. One study post-Katrina by Fothergill and Peek (2008) highlights that age in general is sometimes left unexamined yet as a social category, is likely to overlap with others and shape experiences and relationships (2008:29). Whilst their focus on evacuation, displacement and adjustment for Katrina-affected children from New Orleans (returners and non-returners) is insightful, the processes affecting their life course in terms of gender and sexuality remain an area of unknown. Moreover, because the study is about children and therefore limited to under-18s, a gap in research still remains with regards to young adults and the processes that affect their lives after a disaster. Further to this, there may be a difference between the concerns of teenagers with younger children and as such, it might be important to evaluate these differences particularly where a child is closer to official adulthood, i.e. aged 17. However, it is young women who are the hardest hit here as children (defined as under 18 years old) often have aid channelled to them through aid agencies (such as Save the Children and Plan International) whereas young women are invisibilised through their lack of childcare responsibilities and by not being children themselves.

Youth Organisations also pointed to LGBTQI youth facing greater risk post-Katrina due to pre-existing discrimination with trans youth being particularly vulnerable (Youth BreakOut, field notes 2012). Interestingly, very little emerged regarding the gendered intersections with sexuality. This is surprising due to the fact that New Orleans is hailed as the 'gay capital of the South.' Therefore, one would expect reports – academic and media – to have emerged that documented or highlighted these groups. However, very little came to the fore. Most, notably, D'Ooge's short article raised the issue of adult lesbian women (D'Oooge 2008) and later the NGOs YouthBreakOut and INCITE raised the issues of discrimination faced by many of the trans community during and after Katrina (INCITE 2007; YouthBreakOut).

Sexuality is often neglected in disaster research so perhaps it is not as surprising as first proposed that it would be neglected post-Katrina, even in the 'gay capital.' Indeed, research showed that a review of media coverage and research about LGBTQI people post-disaster between 2004-12 revealed discrimination and marginalisation (Eads 2002; Gaillard, Gorman-Murray and Fordham 2017; Howes, Murray and McKinnon 2014). This research included issues faced by LBGTIQ communities in New York post 9/11 (Eads 2002), a city that is seen a relatively progressive in the United States. Even the comprehensive IWRP report on "Women, Disaster and Hurricane Katrina" misses sexuality from its recommendations for further research (IWRP 2010b). This could be because it is often deemed a 'sensitive' topic particularly where it intersects with social and cultural norms. However, this is not a reason to remain silent on the topic. Furthermore, describing New Orleans as a 'gay capital' reduces a wide and diverse group of people to a specific gay identity which masks the rich variety of queer identities (Richard 2010). Within this, there is an assumption that all queer identities are accepted and treated equally within and outside of queer communities, which is not the case. For example, trans people in New Orleans have faced discrimination historically (D'Ooge 2008).

In a general sense, sexuality is important because very little research exists on this post-disaster and New Orleans may provide a unique setting to explore LGBTQI communities because of its assumed affinity to these communities. However, like age, sexuality appears to be marginalised. Even further marginalised were trans-women and trans-men, both of whom were known to experience varying degrees of violence and discrimination pre-Katrina as well as after the event (INCITE 2007). Little information or knowledge exists about the experiences of LGBTQI communities.

A triple threat then may be faced by young, queer-identified women. Indeed, LGBTQI youth were already an "at risk" vulnerable group in New Orleans pre-Katrina (O'Pry 2012; Youth BreakOut, field notes 2012). Even further marginalised were trans-women (both MtoF and FtoM) many of whom experienced varying degrees of discrimination. Queer-identified youth in the United States are likely to be seen to be vulnerable because they are likely to have experienced negativity and or violence from social, cultural, institutional, political and familial actors, even in the 'gay capital' (Youth BreakOut, field notes 2012; O'Pry 2010). However, very little is known about the experiences of young women in general and even less is known about queer young women's experiences. This study seeks to explore these intersecting identities of youth, gender and sexualities in order to understand what it was like to grow up after Katrina during periods of lifecourse change, such as having sexual experiences, exploring gender identities and what kind of 'women' (or people) they were going to become.

## Queering Katrina

The state of Louisiana has a contradictory history with 'queer' rights. On the one hand, New Orleans has been characterised as a gay haven and on the other, New Orleans is feared by conservative Southern culture, that characterises the city as dangerous, risky and excessive (Richards 2010). The contention has been covered by various online media sources which will be drawn on here to demonstrate the cultural and social contradictions. New Orleans, can thus be described "as a libertine city in a conservative region" (Mosely 2012). Nestled in what is known as the 'Bible Belt' of America, gay marriage is not officially recognised. In fact, Louisiana voters approved a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in 2004, (McGill and Plaisance 2013). However, in terms of tourism, New Orleans is promoted as a gay marriage haven even though the marriage would not be legally recognized (McGill and Plaisance 2013). In terms of legal protection, the Police Department has also been under scrutiny for reasons that include discrimination against LGBTQI people (INCITE 2007;McGill and Plaisance 2013).There has been continued resistance to gay rights but hate crime laws have been amended to cover sexual orientation (HRC 2007). This does not include gender identity (HRC 2007) despite being very much tied up with sexuality. These contradictions of lived realities and state laws may suggest that LGBTQI people faced specific vulnerabilities prior to Katrina that are based on their sexualities. This relatively small amount of information suggests this is the case. After Katrina, research and activists highlighted that sexuality was marginalised at all levels including relief and reconstruction, media and academia (Youth BreakOut, field notes 2012; D'Ooge 2008).

Despite the 'anti-gay' legislative culture of Louisiana, New Orleans is seen to be the 'gay capital' of the 'deep south' in Northern America (Harrah's advertisement on IGLTA 2013). This is particularly so in terms of entertainment and tourism, with online 'e-zines' like 'Out Traveller' and 'Travel and Leisure' providing copious information for potential queer travellers (OutTraveller 2014; Travel and Leisure 2013). Every year, thousands of 'queer' travellers set their sights to New Orleans and the hurly-burly whirl of the thriving 'Big Easy' hosting nightly 'gay' entertainment in addition to some of the biggest queer events on the North American Calander. 'Southern Decadence' and 'Mardi Gras' are two of the most popular. However, these spaces often cater for gay male clientele rather than female and transgendered spaces. For example, 'GayCities' website demonstrates that the number of 'gay' male venues far outweighs the number of lesbian and queer female venues, at 24 venues being listed as 'mostly men' and only four listed as 'mostly women.' Where the clientele is mixed (i.e. gay and lesbian) a further 4 venues can be added to this figure bringing the total to 8 lesbian-friendly bars (GayCities, accessed 14/05/2014). This is still a lot less than gay-male venues. 'Decadence' is also known to cater largely to gay men rather than women (McGill and Plaisance2013). This indicates that the few venues that are centred around lesbian and queer women's entertainment may be even more important to the audiences they attract precisely because there are not as many. It seems that prior to Katrina, there were very few queer women's venues or entertainment. Furthermore, after an analysis of queer literary response from LGBTQI writers, Richards (2010) found that queer culture was reduced very specifically to Bourbon Street, excluding the range of queer communities across the city and reducing queer culture to just one space and just one voice.

The LGBT Community Centre of New Orleans (LGBTCC) was one of the only social spaces, founded in 1991 but it appeared to have disconnected with the younger community at the time the interviews were conducted. However, there was a mood of change and it now seems that the LGBT Centre is making progress. For example, in 2011 'Safe Space' was introduced for LGBT and questioning youth to have somewhere to go (Interview notes, LGBTCC New Orleans 2014). Despite the fact that there were LGBT and queer communities both pre and post Katrina, it still remained the case that spaces for women were few and far between. Katrina resulted in a complete halting of the work at the LGBTCC (LGBTCC 2014). It has taken almost eight years to re-establish this organization, particularly for the younger generation of New Orleans.

The case was very different for another group, named in this research as the 'Kings.' Through field observations and notes, it was discovered that The Kings have an interesting history in New Orleans that has been shaped by Hurricane Katrina. The Kings were never

a community group like the LGBTCC. In fact, they may not even describe themselves this way today. As a focus point of this study due to many of the participants' being connected to The Kings as performers or audience members, The Kings is explored as a way of collective action post-Katrina. Before Katrina they were based on bonds of friendship but after the storm, many drag kings never returned and had it not been for two members who put the show back together, The Kings may never have taken to the stage again.

The Kings provide a different space to the many gay venues although they do participate at Mardis Gras and Southern Decadence festivals, they participate as a drag king troupe and attract a different cohort, they are one of the only regular 'women's' events. Because of this, they have an extremely loyal fan base. Audience loyalty became tested in 2011 when The Kings changed venues, moving out of the popular Bourbon Street venue and into a different neighbourhood that was more edgy and 'cool' but was less well-known to queer women. Around the time of Phase One of the research, The Kings had to 'Hipster,' a frat-style dive bar in a less accessible area. After just under one year at Hipster, The Kings swung full circle and negotiated their spot back at the Place (at the time of Phase Two). The troupe were much happier and the shows were more packed than I had ever seen them so being on Bourbon Street certainly had its benefits. This is interesting in relation to Richards (2010) paper who warned against defining queer culture as exclusive to Bourbon Street. It does seem that the reputation of this area of New Orleans, particularly in terms of entertainment spaces, is difficult to replace as The Kings' own journey around different neighbourhoods in New Orleans demonstrates.

Katrina did lead to change for more attention to queer women's space. For example, Sunny who participated in the life history interviews was an integral part of creating the festival, Southern Dykadance which takes place after Decadence with the focus on queer women as the name suggests. Sunny returned to New Orleans as a result of Katrina but had Katrina not happened, she may never have come back and Dykadance may never have been created so in this respect, Katrina changed queer culture in New Orleans. At the time of the research, Dykadance was in its infancy and it will be interesting to see how important it has become on queer women's calendars across New Orleans and the southern states. Other young women also moved to New Orleans as a result of Katrina either back to or as entirely new arrivals to be a part of this change, not just in queer culture but in feminist culture too, as part of a movement of change. All of the women who participated in this research, however they came to be in New Orleans, whether they had returned after many years, felt the call to action from afar and decided to embark on a new city or whether they never left, all had an interest in positive change, for themselves and for their communities.

# Chapter 9: Katrina and the Wider Gender Literature: Links, Expansions and Gaps

In the research on Hurricane Katrina, much of what we know about women's gendered experiences post-disaster is echoed and expanded, both the negative and the positive. Vast headway has been made into social inequalities and the intersections of gender with race and class (Dyson 2006; Enarson and David 2012; Tierney 2012). In terms of scholarship, much has been learnt. The Newcomb College Centre for Research on Women (NCCROW) at Tulane University was at the forefront in highlighting the importance of women and gender, producing reports and factsheets on the plight of women in New Orleans (Laska, Hearn Morrow, Willinger and Mock 2008). They raised issues such as economic opportunities, housing, healthcare, mental health, domestic violence, reproductive health, young women's sexual health, sexuality and how the leadership and contributions of women can be built on (NCCROW 2008:2-3). Much scholarship has emerged. In particular, the "working poor," poverty and the inequalities faced by African Americans began to be particularly well documented (Gault et al 2005:2; Henrici 2010; IWPR 2008). Below, some key trends are identified and situated within broader gender and disasters themes where appropriate with some emerging areas also explored, identifying key gaps in knowledge and areas for future research. In terms of the negative gendered consequences of disaster, GBV and IPV, decline in health, lack of work, poverty, class discriminations and lack of space to be heard are among the key issues of women's gendered inequality post-Katrina (Gault et al 2005; Laska et al 2008; Luft, Jenkins and Phillips; Henrici 2010; Jancik 2010; Jones-DeWeever 2008; Lui and Holmes 2008; NCCROW 2008). As with the review of the general literature on gender and disasters, the below review is not exhaustive and is selected in order to draw out the aims and objectives of this thesis.

### *Race and Class Dynamics*

Race and class dynamics were highlighted early on in the literature but the intersections of these with gender were missing until later (Dyson 2006; Litt, Skinner and Robinson 2012; Reid 2012; White 2012). Research showed that where working class identity intersected with gender alongside Black and African American identity, women at the centre of this intersection were disproportionately affected by Katrina (Gault et al 2005; Jones-DeWeever 2008:1; INCITE no date). This reality was explained through the fact that Black

and African American women are more highly concentrated than any other demographic in services and sales with already lower job security and wages than other employment and industries that were hard to recover post-Katrina (NCCROW 2008:8). Here what is identified is how the existing inequalities faced by Black and African America women impacted them more severely after Katrina demonstrating that existing power relations can be exacerbated by disaster. Despite the fact that over half the population in New Orleans is Black African American and seven colleges and universities exist, with three being traditionally Black, only 14% of Black and African American women aged 25 and over have degrees compared to their white and Hispanic counterparts where 55% hold degrees (NCCROW 2008:8).

Class also emerged as an important aspect of Katrina and could be particularly emphasised when intersecting with race and gender. For example, working class women were particularly affected by the lack of public transport which they used to get to work and to get around generally, many of whom were African American (Laska 2008:13). However, a further interesting trend emerged around class with research showing that class can serve as a social buffer to economic hardship post-Katrina. Affluence and higher social class provided space for women's organising and enabled their voices to be heard as the community group, Women of the Storm demonstrated (David 2010). Higher social class also meant that women in these groups had access to better health insurance and some continued to be paid during displacement, such as the staff at Tulane University and The University of New Orleans (UNO) whereas women working in service jobs for example would not be paid (Laska et al 2008:14-16).

However, middle-class women became vulnerable post-Katrina (David 2012) highlighting that few come out "ahead" following a disaster (Laska et al 2008:16). Even where access to resources is available the cost of evacuation and rebuilding, losses, depleted savings, loan repayments and the decline in wages (Laska et al 2008:16) created a precarious environment for middle-class women in particular creating the potential for new vulnerabilities to be created. Middle-class women are among those most affected by insecure or insufficient insurance policies. Indeed, women within middle-class economic status were suggested to be made vulnerable by inadequate health insurance (Gault et al 2005:1; Jones-DeWeever 2008:3).

***Studying 'Up'***

David (2010) highlights that there is a distinct gap in disaster research generally on 'studying up.' That is, the comprehensive literature available on the impact of class in experiencing disaster is heavily weighted towards working and lower classes centralising around poverty where class is associated with socioeconomic vulnerability (David

2010:249). However, the coping mechanism of affluent and middle-classes of disaster survivors are equally important to consider and this is indicated in the wider literature although very little has engaged with these groups so far (Enarson and Fordham 2004; Fordham 1999; Fothergill 2004). In terms of Katrina, disaster research mirrored the general trends to focus on class as vulnerability (Gault et al 2005; Henrici 2010). This is not surprising given that the greatest negative impact was shouldered by those who were economically and socially vulnerable where class along with race, gender and poverty played a significant role (Jones-DeWeever 2008; Henkel et al; Henrici 2010; INCITE no date; Niman). By studying 'up' researching the impact of a particular women's organisation established post-Katrina, Women of the Storm, David (2010) demonstrates that the affluence of the founders enabled the organisation to use their class as power and through their access to resources, bring much needed political attention and money into the region (David 2010:250,257).

***Lack of Childcare and Parenting Challenges***

After Katrina, research pointed toward a lack of childcare facilities which among the other issues faced post-Katrina around displacement, income and so on, led to those with children facing parenting challenges (Peek and Fothergill 2008). This was found to be closely linked to their capacity to gain employment, but also that there was the lack and slow re-entering of child care facilities to New Orleans (Jones-DeWeever 2008:2-3; Liu and Plyer 2007 ; Peek and Fothergill 2008). However, very little work points towards how young people fared under these parental challenges. For example, research from other disasters suggests that teenage girls are weighed down with an increased burden of care for younger siblings, grandparents and household duties (Norlha 2015). The fact that challenges were identified for parents suggests that young people and particularly older teenage girls and young women living with their families are likely to have experienced greater stress. However, we do not yet know.

NCCROW's review of statistics suggested that women faced particular difficulties in returning home post-Katrina. The trend showed that women headed households (family and non-family), decreased by 46% after the storm (NCCROW 2008:6). This could be linked to a complex intersection of employment opportunities, increase in caregiving and other responsibilities. Young women may be positioned in a specific way here but as there is very little literature, we do not yet know if this was the case.

***Insufficiency of Healthcare and Mental Health Services***

A particular concern that echoes wider gender literature was healthcare and mental health services specifically. The impact of Katrina on mental health was highly gendered (Jencik 2010:84,94; Mock 2008) and other research pointed toward a greater impact on youth

mental health (Rowe and Liddle 2008). Something more unique to the USA and Katrina specifically was the issue of healthcare in relation to insurance due to the two-tier health system meaning that social class, poverty and income had a serious impact on the kind of healthcare received pre and post Katrina (Rudowitz, Rowland and Shartzer 2006).

The provision of adequate healthcare is a problem in America due to a 'two-tier' health system but New Orleans boasted a robust government-sponsored 'free' healthcare system and a large public hospital, Charity Hospital prior to Katrina (Rudowitz et al 2006). However, by 2008, Charity Hospital had failed to reopen (Jones-DeWeever 2008:3) further increasing the vulnerability of working class Black and African American women who relied on these services (Henrici 2010). Healthcare was severely affected by Katrina and the floods (Liu and Holmes 2008). New vulnerabilities were also created for middle-class women who were affected by inadequate insurance and lack of facilities (Gault et al 2005:1; Jones-DeWeever 2008:3). This highlights that economic resources and protections of social class can be inadequate. Additionally, economic resources do not protect against emotional impacts (Laska et al 2008:15).

Within the lack of healthcare, a significant problem also emerged in mental health not only in the lack of services but also in the increase of those experiencing mental health problems as a result of Katrina (Sprang and LaJoie 2009). Research by Jancik (2010) also found that women and men experienced mental health difficulties in different ways where women were more likely to experience immediate PTSD and stress symptoms, men were more likely to experience a delay, reporting systems around one year after the event (Jencik 2010:86,94). Whilst this is in line with wider literature as Jencik also found that women are likely to worry about the future and experience sadness, she also found that two years after the event, women were more likely to be satisfied with their lives than men (Jencik 2010:83,86). This could be linked to the findings around post-event trauma where Jencik found that women's trauma was likely to appear immediately after the event and get better as time went on but men were more likely to experience a delay in trauma, reporting PTSD symptoms one year after Katrina (Jencik 2010:94). Other studies however highlight that women's mental health problems continue rather than resolve with women three times more likely than men to experience PTSD post-Katrina than men(Jones-DeWeever 2008:3; Mock 2008; NCCROW 2008:9). Also linked to health was the increase in gender-based violence particularly intimate partner violence (Greeley 2008; Jenkins and Phillips 2008; Jones-DeWeever 2008:2; Luft 2008; Thornton and Voight 2007).

***Gendered Violence***

Extensive research demonstrated an increase in GBV and IPV in particular and sexual assault post-Katrina (Greeley 2008; Jenkins and Phillips 2008; Jones-DeWeever 2008:2;

Luft 2008; Thornton and Voight 2007). There was a 68% increase in reports of rape as well as increasing rates of interpersonal violence (McCarthy and Philbin 2007). Rape is so widely underreported under time of 'normalcy' that it is likely to be equally impossible, if not more so, for anyone to put out a general statistic of how many rapes occurred post-Katrina and in what context. Williams and Voight (2007) explored narrative victim accounts and qualitative research data to unpack the experiences of women who did report rape to draw attention to the fact that even if the number of rapes, particularly stranger rapes, whilst controversy still remains regarding the actual incidence of rapes that took place, they did happen.

However, it was also found that even though there was likely to be an increase in conflict and violence in relationships, there were many cases where women were forced to stay with their abusers but that under normal circumstances they would have been able to leave, in part down to how FEMA money was paid and also attributed to the breakdown in infrastructure which included women's shelters and loss of support networks through displacement (Jenkins and Phillips 2008). Katrina seemed to correlate with a general rise in relationship conflict. For example, one study looked at postpartum young women in intimate relationships showed that experiences directly related to the hurricane were likely to result in conflict generally as well as an increased likelihood of violence in their relationships. This included shouting and swearing as well as experience being insulted, sworn, shouted, or yelled at, pushed, shoved, or slapped and being punched, kicked, or beaten up (Harville, Taylor, Tesdai, Xiong and Buekens 2011).

Another form of violence that emerged in Katrina was through police brutality with reports emerging that African American single mothers and LGBTQI communities, particularly trans individuals were being discriminated against on the basis of race, sexual and gender identities (INCITE no date:49). Indeed, increased rates of GBV seem to be exacerbated by intersecting processes and identities. For example, a study that surveyed GBV through exploring rates of domestic violence in trailer parks for displaced people in Louisiana and Mississippi found that they were three times higher than the national average (Larrance, Anastario and Lawry 2007). As those living in trailer parks during displacement were more likely to be lower or working class, it is clear that class plays a strong part in women's experience of violence post-disaster.

Violence was also reported more generally with the city being described as violent and dangerous due to heightened crime rates (McCarthy and Philbin 2007). Indeed, this seemed to increase for years with 2008 figures showing that rates of violent stranger

crimes (homicide and armed robbery) reached an all-time high for what was already a violent city (Jenkins and Phillips 2008)

***Women are a Diverse Category***

The research demonstrated that 'women' are a diverse category and provide diverse contributions in their communities (Jones-DeWeever 2008:5). Additionally, Jencik's extensive quantitative survey research demonstrates the importance of other social markers of identity in feminist research. For example, her study highlighted that it was not always gender that was the significant factor in post-Katrina issues (2010:59-64,120). Thus, intersectional analysis is crucial to understanding the processes of living through a disaster.

It is increasingly observed that there is a need to recognise the diversity of women's gendered experiences, paying attention to the intersections of multiple identities in order not to homogenise women's experiences and pay greater attention to the needs of women and men in disasters (D'Ooge 2008; Jencik 2010:59-64,120; Jones-DeWeever 2008:5). This is also reflected in feminist research that calls for a greater attention to the lives and daily realities of women in disaster (Hearn Morrow 1999). Indeed, there is still a large gap in research on the lived gendered experiences of post-disaster lives, of women and of men.

Jencik's (2010) study using survey data to investigate whether Katrina had gendered impacts, particularly on quality of life, coping with their new lives and the difficulties in their everyday lives had some very interesting and unexpected findings. Her thesis hypothesised that gender would be a significant organising factor of various post-disaster vulnerabilities and whilst this was true in relation to women's income-earning opportunities and gendered differences in psychological stress (2010:122), Jencik found that women were not always the most negatively affected. Gender did seem to change how Katrina was experienced but often race, education, age and income dynamics were significant as well (2010:59-64, 121,122).

***Gendered Leadership in Times of Crisis***

Women are shown to demonstrate strong community leadership in times of crisis and grassroots organising and this has been demonstrated by women of New Orleans (Laska et al 2008:19). Indeed, women's leadership and organising can be especially successful when 'elite' women are at the helm (David 2012). Often these contributions go unrecognised. One core issue is that due to the gendered division of labour in New Orleans, few women had experience in construction related work or co-ordination of this work (Laska et al 2008:15).

Gendered leadership and organising can be among the positive outcomes of disaster, and this is the case for a few groups in New Orleans after Katrina in line with broader gender and disaster scholarship. Gendered leadership and community organising has taken place at grassroots level in the poorest and most affluent communities across New Orleans (David 2012; Luft 2009). David's study of 'Women of the Storm' an elite women's group that sought to gather a diverse cross section of New Orleanian women to bring political attention and funds to New Orleans also highlights an interesting issue around women's use of power and social class where they have a higher status and also how femininity is used to women's advantage (David 2012). However, it is the exception rather than the rule as many more women's voices go unheard (Jones-DeWeever 2008).

***Women's Voices were Unheard and Invisibilised***

Three further themes have also attracted discussion around collective space and social networks, stereotypes and norms in complex ways. Collective space in women's organising at grassroots level has been highly active post-Katrina and reflects the broader literature on gender and disasters however, even though there is lack of leadership opportunities at disaster management levels also reflecting the wider literature, Women of the Storm continue to raise interesting questions on how higher social class and greater access to resources (social and economic) can carve space for women to be heard at 'professional' and public levels but the topic of class and affluence remains underexplored in gender and disaster scholarship (David 2010).

Despite their vast contributions, women's voices went unheard (Jones-DeWeever 2008:4,5). There has been an overall lack of equal and effective political representation for women, city and state-wide (NCCROW 2008:9). Among these women are important intersections and identities that have been invisiblised. For example, failure to recognise women headed households was found to contribute to women being forced to return to abusive partners (Jenkins and Phillips 2008). Further consequences of this meant that lesbian women's family constructions were also ignored (D'Ooge 2008).

***Sexuality***

As the "gay capital of the south" it would be reasonable to deduce that there would be a wealth of literature emerging about the experiences of queer communities post-Katrina. However, this was not the case. The little research that did emerge though, highlighted sexuality as a central organising factor that affects people's capacities to recover (D'Ooge 2008).

Queer communities also have different needs and interests and cannot be lumped together as one unified 'LGBTQI' group. Research has suggested that New Orleans queer culture

predominately caters towards gay men, particularly gay male tourists with Mardis Gras and Southern Decadence being mostly gay male events (Richards 2010). Indeed, Richards (2010) critiqued the queer community's response to Katrina for failing to record the wide range of queer experiences and responses to the storm (Richards 2010:534). Research by D'Ooge (2008) also found that lesbian women suffered negatively post-Katrina in terms of access to recovery resources.

Women who did not meet heteronormative ideals of womanhood and femaleness, such as lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer women were particularly neglected (Laska et al 2008:6) and very little is known about their experiences and responses to Katrina. The women's organisation, INCITE also reported police brutality directed towards LGBTQI people, particularly those of trans identities in the wake of Katrina (INCITE 2007:49). What this small body of literature shows is that despite being known as a haven for queer people across the southern states, queer people and queer women and trans people particularly were grossly underrepresented in all elements of disaster recovery, despite having unique capacities and vulnerabilities.

***Women and Femininities***

One interesting finding from David's (2010) research for this study is around the notion of 'femininity.' This draws attention to the complexity of gender norms and stereotypes and echoes wider gender research in development contexts about women using traditional roles for political activism but not engaging with feminism per se (Corcon-Nantes 1993; Fisher 1993). As a group, Women of the Storm relied on cultural assumptions about Southern women's femininity including ladylike behaviour, being docile, dignified, polite and grateful, utilising their skills as good hostesses, erring away from any behaviour that would seem demanding and aggressive, consciously distancing themselves from feminism (2010:255,259). As a result of this identity, Women of the Storm were highly successful in bringing in money to the affected region and have also established themselves as a key player in New Orleans' political future (David 2010). What is interesting is the conscious reliance on femininity. In addition, the age group of the women is interesting, with the youngest being 32 and the oldest 78 (2010:251), the group can be said to be adult in essence. This begs the questions then, do young women have the same or different understandings of 'using' femininity for social change and moreover, do young women from middle-class and privileged backgrounds use their social class as a way to change society? Do they have the same kind of power? Does women's organising have to be consciously or explicitly feminist in order to bring about positive change and what kind of feminisms? (David 2012:261). All of this can be particularly linked to feminist scholarship on lifestyle media, which is popular in USA/Anglo-world. Those critical of lifestyle media

and within this, the notion of postfeminism and empowerment as achieved, suggest that whilst on the surface, the goal can be framed as 'empowerment,' the strategic goal is rooted in neoliberal economics whereby promoting a commitment to certain kinds of femininity is a tool for other goals, such as consumerism (McRobbie 2007; Gill 2007). Much like the 'co-benefits' of including women and girls in DRR, gender and women's empowerment is promoted as smart economics rather than for empowerments' sake and not for women themselves.

***Teenage Girls and Young Women***

Some interesting findings emerged from wider research projects and hypotheses around the effects of Katrina on young women. For example, teen pregnancy rates decreased post-Katrina but IPV was reported to increase for young women and teenage girls (Greeley and Planned Parenthood of Louisiana and The Mississippi Delta 2008:70). Pre-Katrina New Orleans had one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy, STI and HIV/AIDS infection rates in the US and schools are not required to teach sex education, but the transformation of New Orleans public school system because of Katrina could provide a space for change (Greeley and Planned Parenthood of Louisiana and The Mississippi Delta 2008). However, it was noted that the population of New Orleans 'aged' as a result of Katrina because of the lack of return of girls under 18 years old so this could be a factor in the decrease of teen pregnancy (Greeley 2008).

For the purposes of this study, one of the interesting things Jencik found was that younger people were more likely than older people to live with others or have others living with them due to physical losses and displacement as a result of Katrina, highlighting that for living situations, age not gender was a significant organising factor (Jencik 2010:60-61). Youth again was a significant factor when thinking about the future and experiencing depression (Jencik 2010:83,86).

***Situating Katrina in Gender and Disasters Scholarship***

Women's health and women's access to health services is known to be severely impacted post-disaster. Within this, it is noted that whilst there is a recognition that mental health must be accounted for, more focus is needed in this area. Research on PTSD emerging from psychology disciplines indicates some important youth dimensions to mental health post-disaster but more sociological research is needed. Further to this, more research into the lived experiences of disaster around feelings and fears could help to illuminate our understandings of mental health post-disaster which could be particularly helpful for young people as 'growing up' under normal times is thought to involve a number of challenges. Growing up in times of disaster could exacerbate these challenges.

GBV continues to be a topic that divides with conflicting evidence on whether GBV actually increases post-disaster or the feeling that there is an increase is what is more prevalent. Either way, it is very much linked to gendered imbalances of power and the fact that in most societies across the world, women must live in fear and expectation of male violence. Young women have been noted to have specific experiences or fears around GBV but much more is needed to understand young women's concerns.

Women's employment is known to suffer post-disaster. Reasons for this include the higher concentration of women in lower paid jobs as well as the gendered division of labour whereby women are more highly concentrated in caregiving roles and insecure labour. Women also have a greater responsibility for unpaid labour within the household. However, our understandings of the inner workings of households is still limited as is our understanding of households that do not fit the model of male-headed heterosexual family households. Female headed households are more highly recognised but these are also situated within heterosexual family relations including an assumption that the preference would be for a male-headed household. Different kinds of households such as same-sex family households and non-family households are particularly unknown. This is interesting in terms of young women as Katrina research suggested that young people were more likely to live in collective non-family households than adults.

Much is documented about women's grassroots collective organising as well as the fact that despite this there is still a lack of leadership roles for women in DRR. Much of what we know about women's organising is grassroots and about adult women. It is not known how young women organise after a disaster and even if they organise collectively; further, David's research suggests that class could be a factor as to how successful organising can be. What is highlighted throughout is that space to be safe and space to be heard are both important for young women. Indeed, for young women, these could be empowering and this will be explored in this study by looking at The Kings.

Breaking down stereotypes and greater reflection about femininities and femaleness (like the new interest in men and masculinities) could help us to destabilise norms that position women unequally to men and in vulnerabilities and risks. Unpacking these myths, particularly those that focus only on collectivity as a space for empowerment and dismissing individual transformation, could help to move away from the assumed desire of women to be community minded.

***Summary***

Feminist and gender scholars working on Katrina have urged for further research including the areas around employment, gender pay gap, health and mental health (Laska

et al 2008:10). Excellent contributions on the intersections of gender with race and class have significantly developed this area of research within gender and disasters (Dyson 2006; Litt, Skinner and Robinson 2012; Reid 2012; White 2012). This research demonstrated the devastating consequences of existing power relations and social inequalities (Tierney 2012). In addition, literature in 'new' gender and disaster areas began to emerge on processes and identities related to class, youth, gendered femininities and sexualities (David 2012; D'Ooge 2008; Fothergill and Peek 2008). Overall, research found that women in general were disproportionately affected by Katrina. However, at times other identities and processes emerged as equally or more important both of which changed the disaster experiences. For example, race or sexuality were both highlighted as identities and processes that created specific Katrina experiences demonstrating that intersectionality in research is crucial.

As processes and identities, youth, gender and sexualities are enmeshed in complex existing power relations. As discussed above, we know that existing power relations can be exacerbated by disaster. For example, the combination of race, class and gender meant that Black, African American women were positioned particularly precariously post-Katrina (Reid 2012). Other research demonstrated that class could also be an asset when occupying affluent class spaces so that when class intersected with gender and femininities, women were able to use this combined identity to effect change (David 2012). Within this emerged themes around leadership, community and influencing capacity showing that researching 'up' can provide useful insights for disaster research as class changes the post-disaster experience. Further, class is not a static protector or a guarantee to vulnerability but is linked to a multitude of other identities and processes that could provide new revelations. Very little is known about the specific intersections of youth, gender and sexualities which means research needs to look at other intersections.

Women are a diverse category as the literature above highlights. Therefore, understanding the key issues in the existing Katrina research in relation to young women experiences could provide further insights about a little studied group. For example, health and mental health services are known to have had gendered impacts post-Katrina both of which need to be understood in relation to different lifecourse experiences as growing up is likely to change one's engagement with health and mental health. Health and mental health also impact young women's decision-making power in addition to their intimate relationships but very little is known. Further to this, different relationships between young women with other household members and significant people in their lives could help us to understand household and community dynamics.

The review of gender and disaster literature shows that much is known about women's experience but that gender intersects with many other identities which can alter women's disaster experiences. Within this, Katrina gender and disaster literature has added to this by drawing attention to the important intersections of gender with race and class. However, the intersections of youth and sexuality with gender are still underexplored despite both youth and sexualities being positioned as against normative understandings of the world. Youth are positioned as transitional and/or unruly, as not quite adults. Sexualities that do not fit within normative heterosexual, maternal frameworks are also positioned on the periphery. Youth can be linked non-normative sexualities through adult fears of teen pregnancy and hedonistic sexual behaviour. Furthermore, queer sexualities are further invisibilised. The key idea of this thesis is to contribute the growing body of gender and disasters scholarship by focussing on areas that are little known and build on those that are as both have been highlighted as important to gender and disaster scholarship.

# PART FIVE

# EXPLORING WHAT WE KNOW THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUNG WOMEN

In Part Five, key themes within existing gender and disaster scholarship are explored in relation to the findings of this study. On a theoretical level, the notion of disasters is questioned as a sociologically problematic concept, process and event (Quarantelli 1998; 2005). The study aligns itself with disasters as social events (Blaikie et al 1994). Within notion of disasters as social events, the study attempts to engage with subjective interpretations of disaster through looking at individual life histories and recognising the broader lens of crisis such as secondary disaster and the disaster within the disaster (Bradshaw 2014). Particularly, to explore what a disaster is by understanding the lived experiences and recollections of the event itself, recognising that this may not be the same as official or legislative definitions of disasters broadly and Katrina specifically (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998; Buckle 2005). To this end, exploring the outcomes of negative effects and disruption are important to understand (Gilbert 1998:17; Rosenthal 1998:147; Kroll Smith and Gunter 1998:161; Stallings 1998:129; Boin 2005; Quarantelli 2005:346). Rather than taking a simple scientific approach as can often happen in DRR, this research seeks to contribute to the body of work that reflects the needs and interests of communities (Gilbert 1995 cited in Hewitt 1998:77). The community in this study comprises of middle-class young women who were aged between 13 and 35 at the time of Katrina, many of whom identified as queer at the time of the study in 2012.

Disasters are positioned alongside "un-ness" through the existing definitions that describe disasters as at odds with 'normal' life, for example, positioning disasters as disasters by their negative effects (Barton 2005; Boin 2005; Stallings 2005; 1998; 1997). As such, this thesis argues that disasters are queer and uncanny processes in themselves that, like both terms often bring into light and reveal what is already there but was hidden in a closet of darkness not as the unknown, but as what is not spoken, not seen and hidden. Furthermore, this study problematises disaster definitions through the eyes of the young women, demonstrating the events that were most catastrophic for their lives were often at odds with legislative and official definitions. Rather, the events associated with the

broader realm of 'crisis' might be more appropriate when thinking about how people live through and grow up following a disaster like Katrina.

This study is particularly focused on the experiences of how young women live through and grow up after Katrina and is particularly interested in whether young women have different experiences to adult women. As such, this chapter will explore key themes about what is known about women's gendered experience of disasters and explore them in relation to young women.

Violence, particularly GBV is an issue that is raised within the broader literature and post-Katrina specifically. However, there is much conflicting evidence on actual rates of GBV. That said, there is a more general consensus that at the very least, fear of violence increases and existing patterns of violence are exacerbated. Some research also drew out the different between GBV and IPV suggesting that the latter does increase post-disaster, supporting the exacerbation theory. Because GBV is more likely to affect women due to gendered power imbalances, it is women who are often most affected. However, in terms of young women, very little is known and much more exploration is needed in terms of their experiences of direct violence and violence within their households. This study will add to the body of work around GBV and IPV drawing out nuanced experiences, particularly around the fear and threat of male violence in public spaces and the intersections with youth and sexualities.

# Chapter 10: Disasters as Social Events "I think there were two disasters that day." (Sunny)

## Introduction

In this chapter, the notion of disaster is explored through the experiences of the young women who participated in the study. It looks particularly at the 'Katrina aftermath and recovery' around what they experienced, how they experienced it and how they described the events of the disaster itself. The findings of the study suggest that disaster can be characterised by its "un-ness" in relation to everyday life. This is also consistent with a paradigm within disaster sociology that argues that it is not at all limited to the actual hazard-disaster itself (Boin 2005:51; Britton 2005:69; Buckle 2005:1919; Cutter 2005:48; Dynes 1998; Jigyasu 2005:51; Kreps 1998; Quarantelli 2005:343; Rosenthal 1998; Smith 2005:217; Stallings 2005:264; 1998:132).

In official, practitioner and academic terms, disasters have a set of boundaries in determining what is and what is not a disaster, which contributes to the notion of disasters as un-ness as well as resulting in many different, clearly demarcated types with different intensities described by specific features. However, in lived reality, this is not always seen to be the case, or at the very least is more complex (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998). The findings of this study show that the defining features of a 'natural' disaster rarely match the everyday recovery of those who have survived. Rather than being concerned with infrastructural failure, the key processes identified around Katrina were linked to evacuation and specifically, the difficulties faced in travelling and difficulties faced with space sharing during evacuation and also returning 'home.'

Overall, the study demonstrates that the lived experience of Katrina for this group of young women aligned more closely to broader disaster terms, defining the various processes of disasters as an opposite to normal life that often did not explicitly relate to the actual hazard of the hurricane and subsequent flooding, but rather to the "un-ness" and disruption of everyday life consistent with the problematision of the notion of disaster within disaster sociology (Boin 2005; Britton 2005; Buckle 2005; Cutter 2005; Dynes 1998; Jigyasu 2005; Kreps 1998; Quarantelli 2005; Rosenthal 1998; Smith 2005; Stallings 2005; 1998).

## Defining Disaster as "Un-ness"

In the past un-ness as processes and effects of serious social disorder were traditionally characterised as 'physical' consequences but in the late 1990's, disaster sociologists and anthropologists drew attention to disorder created at a subjective and psycho-cultural level (Dynes 1998:111; Oliver-Smith 1998:183). An important aspect of un-ness within the subjective and psycho-cultural level was highlighted by a study conducted by Rashid and Michaud (2000) about young women's experiences of the Pakistan Floods, which highlighted that young women have trouble negotiating public and private space post-disaster because these spaces are (temporarily) changed. Young women use space differently to men and during teenage years when young women are negotiating puberty, periods and their changing bodies, the need for space might be more pressing. My own findings also indicate that negotiating space for young women and teenage girls was high on the list of their concerns:

> *My mum actually had her friend Percy and his wife and his two kids actually stayed with us, cos they still didn't have any power when we got home. We had power but they didn't. You got from being comfortable in your house with your parents and whatever, to all these people coming in and I used to be really, really shy and I think at one point we had my mum's friend Abby stay with us too. I don't know it's like we had open doors, you know, come in [laughs]. I didn't really get a say it was just you know it was just "this is what's happening." I don't think anyone asked [if I would give up my room] so I think I was pretty much on the sofa and yeah I was like who are all these people in my house? [laughs] (Betty)*

For Betty, the structure of her household changed and became filled with people she did not know. She faced many struggles with "all these people coming in" to her house and as the youngest member of the household just about to turn 13 years old, she indicated that this meant she had no say in what happened within the household dynamics but paradoxically, the 'strangers' in her house had the most impact on her life-space than any other household members. Even though the people she identified as strangers were taking up her personal space as she was instructed to give up her room and sleep on the couch in the living room, an event of which she had no choice in because Betty was never given the opportunity for consultation, she simply had to do as she was told. As a result, even though Betty understood that these strangers needed somewhere to stay and were worse off than her, Betty's memory of the aftermath of Katrina is that she felt like a stranger in her home, where her space or feelings were not considered as important. Space was not only

something that was taken away from her, it was something that she had no say in and something that could be very important for privacy. Jay also had a similar feeling around lack of consultation:

> *A few days before Katrina, we headed up to Memphis with my mum, her now-husband and my sister. My uncle came for a time and I was sharing a space with my biological sister [at the motel] but it was then me, my sister, my uncle, my mum and her now-husband so all of us were cramped into a one-bedroom hotel room. It was not pleasant really (Jay)*

Jay's experience of cramped 'space sharing' during evacuation was common amongst the participants in the study. However, things changed when the motel opened up their doors and allowed free and discounted rooms for Katrina evacuees so that when Jay's mom's friend arrived with his daughter, Lucie who was also a friend of Jay's, more space was available:

> *Like if Lucie or I would get frustrated we would like switch rooms for a night. I also spent a lot time kind of walking around the hotel, I've always been very fascinated with interior of architecture of hotels and airports.(Jay)*

Doing things like switching rooms that might seem trivial was a way to simply have fun and change up the monotony of displacement along with the uncertainty of when they would return home. Displacement can be a very lonely experience for young women but this does not necessarily mean that young women recoiled into isolation. Jay demonstrates that where life can be challenging and lonely, she found things to do to occupy her time and found ways of enjoying herself, even to the point where she made some big decisions about what she wanted to do with her life in the future:

> *After Katrina they made all the rooms free, they had a big screen TV in the lobby, and they'd let me watch anime on the big TV in the lobby and I spent a lot of time online talking to friends keeping in touch that way and in that time I actually figured out what I wanted to do with my life, that time helped figure stuff out [3 sec pause] it was a very long intricate path to that, each story is like a dot in an impressionist painting but if I had to pick one crucial moment for that, that 21 days in that hotel room talking to friends online, my online friends, film making forums and stuff that was when I realised that I wanted to make movies…Some ideas have changed since then but I've always known I wanted to be creative." (Jay)*

Being alone in unfamiliar, enforced spaces and environments with limited time to be away from family, for example in normal times, participants would spend seven to eight hours a

day at school, put some of the participants in a position where they decided they would make their own space with the resources they had available. As a result, for Jay, she became highly focused on her future. However, as Betty's experience indicates, decision-making space was often juxtaposed with rules and sanctions placed upon them when under the care of parents or guardians as minors. Both stories demonstrate the theme across many of the participants that it was rare for participants to have their own bedroom during the immediate aftermath of Katrina and in many cases, they were sleeping in sitting rooms on make-shift beds or sharing single motel rooms with family, sometimes including extended family and family friends. It was also common for space sharing to swell and shrink with the arrival of other family members or friends, contributing to feelings of uncertainty and disruption. Particularly upsetting was how the outside world saw them as well as dealing with a heavily militarised recovery operation that was well outside the realms of normal every-day life for most. This was seen in how the lootings and shootings were made a significant focus of global media coverage (Sommers et al 2006; Voorhees et al 2007):

> *It was mad, frantic. Well for me, it's just not known to have robberies, it's a small town and you know everybody so I think people just like, snapped. We had never had to deal with anything that bad before so, when it got so crazy I think people just freaked out, and went nuts, I mean, robbing stores of like TVs and stuff, we don't even have power! Why are you getting a TV? I mean they had all these aid people thee from out of state giving food and water and stuff and there was like looting and robberies and you couldn't sleep without protection but I can understand robbing for like food and stuff. I guess everybody went into a mass panic and freaked out, I mean we didn't hardly get any help until like two weeks after the hurricane hit (Elizabeth)*

Lootings and shootings were very much against their normal experiences in their every-day lives and these events, unanimously experienced second-hand through news media or passed down in stories, played on many minds when talking about what they remembered from the immediate aftermath of Katrina. Looting and rioting is not usually associated as a consequence of disaster in the classical sense (Quarantelli 2005:380). What this points to is the whole notion of the disaster in New Orleans and firstly, how it was covered by the media and secondly, how the response was heavily militarised.

Firstly, media coverage exacerbated fears and confusion. This also links to a theme drawn out in existing research, particularly from scholars working on GBV post-disaster. Research points to the lack of hard evidence to show that the increase is 'real' or whether there is an increase in the *fear* of violence (Eklund and Telliar 2012; Fisher; Horton 2012; Saad 2009; Saito 2012:273; True 2013). This contradiction is highlighted by Jessica:

> *"We were watching the news all the time to see what was happening in New Orleans and we saw all the looting, damages the flooding, the murders, the rapes and we're hearing about it on the news but you watch the news and you talk to people that stayed and they were like it's not so bad then they're telling you about the stench of death that's in the air it's like that scares you, you don't wanna get back to that." (Jessica)*

For Jessica, what was really scary was watching the TV and hearing about the rapes and lootings and not knowing what was really going on because she was heavily protected by her parents but conversely her parents were not in a good place at all. Her dad had always been abusive and violent to her mum, consistently cheating on her in the past until he had an accident which stopped him from having sex. Rather than stress, Jessica's mum actually realised she did not want to be with her dad anymore after having enough of how he treated her and Jessica was very supportive of this. Secondly, Katrina was dealt with in a militarised fashion from evacuation to immediate aftermath. A key issue bought up by many of the participants was around terminology describing them and the contention lay over the use of evacuee or refugee, both including elements of how outsiders saw them as group of people as among the worse things post-Katrina:

> *Obviously [the worst thing was] the way people see people from New Orleans, that's one of my big problems. It basically made us feel like refugees. Even the news were calling us refugees. They had a strict curfew and everything else. [With the military around] it was kind of a security thing but it was unnecessary. It did make me feel protected but it was kind of a nuisance. You can't do this or that, it was just military everywhere. It was probably a good thing that they were there because everyone went crazy (Betty)*

Betty points to an interesting take on how she saw herself versus how she thought the outside world saw her and the rest of the Katrina survivors which for her was tied up with terminology. Being a Katrina evacuee was more normalised as it is tied into the process of evacuation but being labelled a "refugee" made Betty feel as though she was separated from her home country, that she was part of the un-ness that Katrina had catalysed but more importantly, she links the militarised relief efforts with the characterisation of New Orleanians as outsiders. For example, the enforced curfews and the nuisance of the military that even though it made her feel protected it was more annoying than anything else. However, what she did recall as a good thing was the military presence in dealing with the issue when "everyone went crazy" also identified by other participants. This feeling was exacerbated sometimes by the presence of the military in their towns. The

need for order then was something Elizabeth could see that was missing in the immediate aftermath. However, once the aid started coming in, a new fear emerged:

> *we have a military base right outside our town, and, so for, I mean we're used to army, national guard, whatever, the air force but when they're there in full attire, guns, completely like armed and ready to like go, I mean it was intimidating. I mean like ok, you're standing in line like getting ice and they're there holding a gun like as if you're gonna cut in line or something to steal ice, I mean I don't know it's just like really intimidating so I mean in a sense it was good and in a sense it was just uncomfortable to have them so heavy on it. I think the National Guard could have come and helped with food, with water, I think instead of just sitting there with a gun, actually pass out food and do what you're supposed to do, do your American duty of helping citizens and stuff (Elizabeth)*

Elizabeth's story is interesting because even though she was used to a military presence around her town, the way Katrina was militarised made her feel intimidated and uncomfortable, particularly because she viewed their presence as 'heavy.' When discussing standing in line, an act that can foster feelings of shame and embarrassment for some (Rosenbaum 2012), Elizabeth suggests they were there to prevent people stealing ice rather than supporting people through such devastation. Rather than get rid of the military presence altogether, Elizabeth felt that their services should have been different by taking on a more supportive role. For others though, New Orleans seemed safer for a time because some services that were put in place immediately after Katrina were made permanent:

> *Now they have the shuttle and before Katrina people would get attacked to and from bars and stuff so it did actually get safer (Rita)*

The feeling of safety and measures that would enable socialising seemed to be important to young women. In fact, rather than a 'Katrina' issue of violence, Rita steers more towards the general issue of violence and safety living in a city such as New Orleans. Safety also seemed to be associated with neighbourhood and class:

> *My area has always been like a safe space, especially my neighbourhood. The place I lived was always like for middle class people and retirees. Anywhere I went that was like a questionable area was like always with friends (Jay)*

There were many layers involving what disaster researchers link to the 'window' not of opportunity as suggested by Byrne and Baden in 1995 but of revelation of a society's underbelly and existing unequal power relations (Ariyabandu 2009; Bradshaw and

Linneker 2009). This is reflected in participants' ability to evacuate as well as their perceptions of safety. A further issue around media coverage was for those participants who were living out-of-state at the time of Katrina. In this case, the media coverage acted as a connection to loved ones back home, and when the media had 'moved on,' people in New Orleans were still recovering:

> *I didn't have anyone to talk to and the news thing the media moves on but that doesn't mean I had moved on or my family had moved on and my wife tried to be supportive but I mean you know it's a very hard thing to do (Sunny)*

The time of "un-ness" is longer lasting than news portrayals and is not only physical, as Sunny illustrates, she was struggling to move on from Katrina, even though she was not there herself. Few talked about Katrina as a storm but rather talked more about evacuation and return. One explanation for this might be that all but one of the participants evacuated; this might be understandable as they were not physically there. For Elizabeth, who did not evacuate, the storm itself was the focus of part of her Katrina story, particularly the main thing she remembered from the storm itself was the destruction of her 'shady tree:'

> *"And there was this really big, huge oak tree, a hundred and sixty year old oak tree and it was beautiful and it offered the best shade ever, it was my favourite tree and you wouldn't think that this hurricane would take that tree down because it was so big. So I'm videotaping everything and we hear this big loud bang in my house, whoa, like crash and this tree is down. That big oak tree and I open the door and it was just branches and we were so sad because that was our tree, our shady tree." (Elizabeth)*

The destruction of Elizabeth's "shady tree" had great significance to her and her family. On one level, the tree was a force of nature, rooted and strong, rooting their lives but hearing and almost seeing such a big tree uprooted from the ground also revealed how fragile and vulnerable life could be. For Elizabeth, the destruction of her shady tree changed her backyard into a different landscape that she remembers as a space defined by a before and after of Katrina. This will always be her family home but it is now characterised by what is missing so that it is at once familiar and unfamiliar, much like the uncanny as what is revealed is that even a tree as strong as her shady tree is vulnerable.

For younger teenagers at the time of Katrina, many received 'censored' information about Katrina, although at the same time, they also managed to find out stories about what was happening in New Orleans. One of the ways in which everyone experienced Katrina was through their return from evacuation or returning to 'normal' life, to find left over symbols linked more closely to the participants 'return' to their city and their homes, signifying

that for most who survived Katrina, the return was a significant experience for them and very much defined by "un-ness:"

> *It was very, very strange coming back. Across the lake coming across the bridge there were NO lights. The swamp was still flooded and the smell, it smelled really weird. It was all National Guard, relief workers and government workers. It was very surreal. There were X markings on everything and the X markings were fresh. (Rita)*

The X also explicitly showed the loss, of human and animal life, as well as physical destruction, but the importance is the symbolic reminder:

> *My mum she took me to drive around when it was all clear and everything and it was just ...I mean I was just in awe. I mean I used to go the French Quarter all the time and walk around an d it was just like, nothing but numbers on doors and blue roofs everywhere. Actually the house across the street had a blue roof for the longest time, like for a couple of years (Betty)*

The 'blue roof' Betty is referring to is officially known as Operation Blue Roof as explained above. As the initiative was meant to be a temporary measure, Betty found it unusual that the house across the street had a blue roof for so long also demonstrating that recovery can last years and a constant reminder of the impact Katrina had on people's lives. Participants also bought up the Katrina Marks sprayed onto front doors of properties:

> *[Some of the houses] still had the 'X' painted on, they still hadn't been fixed up. Even when I came back after a year it was still messed up (Phoebe)*

The Katrina Marks, the blue roofs and the lack of city lights marked moments of 'un-ness' for the young women returning to the city, making life after Katrina distinct from life before and drawing attention to life that was far from returned to normal:

> *We would just walk over to each other's' houses and look at the streets and how everything  like abandoned. It was just weird to look around it. (Jay)*

Whilst the physical destruction of houses and streets was something that struck the participants on their return, it was the potential for loss and destruction that played on their minds and like Elizabeth's shady tree, it was often in relation to objects that held meaning:

> *My belongings were fine cos the dorms didn't flood but it was still kind of terrifying that everything could be taken away (Rita)*

Here, Rita's experience reflects how some of the participants were worried about the potential for meaningful objects to be destroyed rather than actual destruction about physical damage, also illustrated by Jessica:

> *We were in Atlanta for I wanna say around two weeks and then that's when they started letting people back in to New Orleans and again it took us like 20 hours just to get to New Orleans and we went to our house and we didn't have any flood damage but we had a lot of wind damage in two rooms, my room was one of them actually. I had picked up all my stuff that was on the ground and put it on my bed and that's where the roof had like caved in like right on top of my bed so all my personal stuff like amazing books that I'd bought in Barnes and Nobel and memories and pictures, all that stuff was on my bed. Luckily a lot of the stuff was in boxes so only the box got damaged but a lot of the stuff that wasn't in boxes got like wet and there was mould everywhere and I had a huge hole in my room (Jessica)*

The physical 'wind damage' was not what Jessica focussed on at all but the security of her cherished possessions that in monetary terms may not have amounted to much, but in terms of her own sense of self and her lifecourse, were irreplaceable. Indeed, where physical damage was "fixable" and not sentimental in value, it was not seen as such a big problem. The importance of these kinds of memories and how they can be linked to seemingly low-value objects that were steeped in meaning was harder to cope with than loss of bricks and mortar:

> *I took a creative memoire class, it wasn't about home and belonging but a lot of us wrote about it, I mean some people in my class had literally lost every single thing. There was this woman who has been collecting these dolls [in my storying class] for her whole life and not a single one was saved. Her house was complete rubble but it was the dolls that she wrote about (Sunny)*

The memories of returning home post-Katrina were subjective, linked by participants often noticing symbolic effects or sensory-type memories. As pointed out by Kroll-Smith and Gunter (1998), it is not the job of researchers to tell people whether what they felt to be disastrous is real but to find out their experiences of what happened. This is interesting because often in official discourses, crisis events are seen as separate and sentimental objects are not discussed at all (Kreps 998). This lack of meaning attributed to the psychological elements of how loss feels in reality, particularly of irreplaceable and sentimental objects that often have little monetary goes against psychological lived experiences (Kreps 1998). Physical structures can be replaced but the emotional

significance of other objects cannot be rebuilt. Both stories here on the loss of objects are also connected to self-history and sense of self.

## Getting Back to 'Normal'

Even though getting back to normal was challenging for the young women participants, it was something that they sometimes strived for in some ways, whilst simultaneously recognising that normal would not be the same as life before Katrina. At times, the findings indicate that this is particularly linked to the good will of others and perhaps can signify a temporary window of positive change. Indeed, research that emerged post-Asian Tsunami from Sri Lanka, also suggested disaster to bring on positive change that is always temporary (Samual 2005; Uyangoda 2005).

Findings also indicated positive change relating to corporations suggesting a stronger level of corporate social responsibility (CSR):

> *I used to work at Casey's they have restaurants all over and when we evacuated to Columbia, South Carolina we went out one time to eat there…when they knew I used to work there they gave us free food and milk to take home and money to buy things. They wouldn't let us pay for our meal and they even said I could go work for them if I decided to stay in Columbia for longer. (Harrie)*

What is interesting though is that for the participants above, some of the young women became the reasons why their families were able to secure 'better' accommodation and other resources such as money, food and clothes. This is particularly the case for Jessica who secured her family a more private place to stay though her part-time job back home:

> *There was a point that we were in Memphis that we just felt so homesick that we wanted to find a Books and Things because when I was working for the bookshop and I got a discount at Barnes and Nobel. So we found one about a mile away from the house we were staying at so we went there and let me tell you that as soon as those people found out that we were from New Orleans and that I worked for a bookshop in New Orleans they were amazing. They gave me $500 in cash, they gave me a map of Memphis so that I could navigate myself, and they also gave us all kinds of food from the café.*
>
> *They found out that we had a baby so they gave us like 2 gallons of milk for the baby and then like and then I had a call from Head Office and the Officer were like ok we're gonna give you a hotel tell me how many rooms that you need how many people are*

*in your party we're gonna give you a hotel it's gonna be paid by the company you're not going to have to worry about it (Jessica)*

However, the CSR was patchy at best because it was not offered in a coherent fashion but rather in a more discriminatory ad-hoc fashion. That said, it was reported by other participants who evacuated to motels that many were offered free rooms, food and clothing at some point during the durations of their stays. Those who were evacuated to the Superdrome are unlikely to have been offered the same opportunities and due to the fact that many displaced to the Superdrome were poor, there is a clear class dimension here. The irony then is that those who are most in need of shelter, services and 'good will' may not be those who actually receive any of those things. Those that could not afford to go to a motel in the first instance could have benefited from such discounts and 'freebies' and support to be able to evacuate.

Post-Katrina, corporations and institutions continued to be key agents in enabling participants back on their feet. These included colleges across the country wavering tuition fees and offering bursaries as well as big corporations opening up stores and offering jobs. Kayla and Jasmine benefited from employment when Organic Groceries (Organics) opened and offered a lot of good jobs to help people get back on their feet:

*I got a job at Organics like as soon as it opened cos the photography place I worked at before, he just couldn't afford to come back here. Pretty much a lot of people were in the same boat as me. (Kayla)*

Jasmine (Jaz for short) was also experiencing the same problem:

*Yeah it got to a point where we were starting to think, I mean I couldn't not work. When Organics opened it was like fresh air and so many of us were there waiting to get jobs as soon as they got here. (Jasmine)*

Elizabeth also benefited from a corporate supermarket opening up in her town which meant she could get a job to help support her family after her father lost his job. She also noticed an increased sense of community in her town especially among those who had not evacuated:

*I mean like neighbours were coming and climbing through our trees and checking on us and when we were going to get bags of ice and getting like 6 bags to give for somebody else, like there was an elder who lived on the end of our road and we would take ice and help people who couldn't get out so we did, we took care of each other we stayed there for each other , it took forever for people to come to us so we had to be there for each other (Elizabeth)*

This is quite common following a disaster that even where there is war and conflict, both sides will join together to help each other however the same research also points to this being a short-term process (Samual 2005:8; Uyangoda 2005). For the Katrina context though, this sense of community and social responsibility was felt to be ongoing and longterm also linking to research by Bradshaw (2004) who highlighted the importance of coordination and commitment for successful and long-term reconstruction (Bradshaw 2004:6) as illustrated by Rita's interpretation of the long-term situation in New Orleans post-Katrina:

> *Rita: There's so much good that's happened in the city because of Katrina. A lot of good work and a lot of people who wouldn't have necessarily have come here and now they understand it.*
>
> *L: So do you feel like you're part of that movement?*
>
> *Rita: Yeah well I decided to stay.*

The field notes also supports the view that there is a commitment to improve conditions in New Orleans where it was observed that a new 'movement' of young, socially conscious people moved to New Orleans in a large influx of highly qualified and socially conscious many of which were young women into the city of New Orleans in order to 'do good' inspired by the events following Katrina.

What a disaster 'is,' is not the same to everyone, official, scholarly or layperson. The 'real' disaster in peoples' lives can be different as suggested by existing research (Bradshaw 2013).

> *"I've completely done a one-eighty since Katrina. Katrina was, a, the hardest, darkest time of my life and it also was the best time in my life because it, helped me in a way. I try not to make it too dramatic but you know, that's what it was. It wasn't dramatic in a bad dramatic, it was life changing I think for everybody who was affected by Katrina. Even after all this time I still have my independence and I'm still clean and I'm still loving my life, I love my girlfriend and I love women and I love everything. If you did it, survived it and are still living that hard working life that's the really good life. End of it." (Elizabeth)*

The way Elizabeth thinks back over Katrina is not actually framed by Katrina 'the storm' but rather is framed by her own internal storm where she was in a bad place in her life, doing drugs and getting into trouble. Instead of viewing Katrina as only devastating, and it was because Elizabeth's family's home and her community were badly damaged, Elizabeth viewed Katrina as the catalyst that helped her to turn her life around by 'getting clean,'

focusing on school and a career and importantly, figuring out her demons, which turned out to be driven by her hiding her sexuality as a queer woman. In the immediate aftermath of Katrina, where Elizabeth and her family were stuck in their house, she used the time to think about how her life could be.

Rather than a set of distinct stages, the disaster aftermath is complex, similarly to youth lifecourse 'stages' where the lines between becoming an adult are often blurred. Within these complex, blurred lines there are important sexuality and gender elements, as Elizabeth highlights, growing up can involve challenging times but making the decision to be honest with oneself, in this case by exploring her sexual identity, a time that is by an official definition, a disaster, may not evoke traumatic memories, but in fact the opposite, memories of growth because a disaster can reveal life to be short, as a wakeup call. As demonstrated by Kroll-Smith and Gunter (1998) in the literature review, disaster can also act as a metaphor for relationships that do not fully relate to the disaster itself, like Elizabeth's battles with addiction during the onset of Katrina. However, Elizabeth decided to use this tragedy as her own personal wake-up call and created a new story. Like lifecourse, demarcated stage models may not reflect the lived experience of what it is like to 'live through' a disaster. Disaster even becomes part of the fabric of their lives as they grow up and reflect on the experience which is also specific to their cohort generation, as illustrated by Beaux:

> *"I didn't let the storm completely take away my senior year. Instead, it pushed me to achieve more because life is too short! Knowing that everything you own can just disappear it makes you think. In a heartbeat you can lose everything." (Beaux)*

What Beaux illustrates is that like many of her cohort generation, crucial years at school were disrupted by closures due to storm damage. Rather than allowing Katrina to consume her Senior year, Beaux's parents allowed her to move out-of-state to continue her studies so that when Beaux recalls her Katrina experience, similarly to Elizabeth, it is framed mostly by becoming more focussed to achieve more with her life. The more official focus when emerging from the immediate aftermath is reconstruction, where the onus is on physical rebuilding. The perspective taken is to 'return to normal' but there is often a forgetting of the complex emotional and psychological impacts of returning to home and that 'normal' will not take one back in time but will be different, a new normal (Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:89). By engaging with Beaux and Elizabeth's stories above, the new normal is a life where Katrina led them to decisions to make positive changes in their lives so that the disaster event was not recalled as to have disastrous consequences for them. Thus, disaster becomes part of life history and the fabric of social and cultural life:

*"It's good because now, I have something to tell, you know, back in my day...to my kids, hurricane Katrina hit and I stayed three months, you know, go upstairs and do your homework life's not that bad." (Elizabeth)*

The story of family and survival, of defying evacuation notifications and protecting her home were important themes to emerge from Elizabeth's story and in the quote above, she looks into the future with a sense that she now has a story of her own to pass down to future generations in her family, as her grandparents had done many years before. Importantly Katrina was a journey of self-discovery and change that led her to good decisions and a happier life. Those months of fighting an addiction and coming through the other side by being forced to grow up has given Elizabeth a strategy for her own future and for the future of the family she might have one day.

Whilst reflecting on growing up after Katrina showed many participants to have made positive changes with their lives, Katrina was still a traumatic event. However, after much time passes, the trauma and anxiety seems to pass and this also seems to be coupled with lifecourse stage. Katrina happened when Billie was 15 and Betty was turning 13 and both young women were under the guardianship of parents, often meaning they could not make all of their own decisions at the time. After a further four storms, up until post-Isaac and the time and space that had passed, some participants identified a sense of calm under pressure:

*Since Katrina I'd probably have to [3 sec pause] let's see, well, like Isaac, well, it made me more aware of what can happen and I don't freak out really (Betty)*

Betty highlights how growing up and having more control over their decisions has meant that future storms, particularly Isaac allowed them to cope better. For Billie, it was about finding her role within her family which also involved rethinking her gender identity as an older son rather than as a daughter. For Betty, it was about being able to be herself which she could now do as she was not under the watchful eyes of her parents. Being 'grown up' was also something that Phoebe hypothesised had she been older during Katrina, showing that as an adult might be different, drawing out some implicit youth elements:

*Definitely it seems like if you were older and settled with a job, or problems where they couldn't travel and stuff. [If they were] younger, depending on the kid I guess, maybe kids can feel more free and stuff, or more oblivious. But I think being a young adult made it easier cos I didn't like have a great career going or anything so I can just wander (Phoebe)*

Like Elizabeth looking into the future with 'something to tell' to future generations of her family, Phoebe reflects that age would have changed the Katrina experience for her. As Phoebe decided to move away to college out-of-state and explore her sexual and gender identities post-Katrina, she had a lot of freedom to do so whereas as she points out, being older and settled with commitments such as a house and children could mean that she would not have had the same 'adventure' and also how children can be freer because they do not have adult responsibilities so for her experience, she could 'just wander' and find her own path. Youth then, especially young adulthood for Phoebe was an important organising factor in how she grew up post-Katrina.

Those participants now with children worry about the next disaster in a different way and most participants would still evacuate, although many did not for Isaac:

> *We need to buy a house but that's something that isn't easy in New Orleans. Now I have my two kids there are decisions that need to be made, things you need to do but then there is that worry. The whole thing, how I think. The whole thing is totally different. (Kayla)*

Something that is interesting is Kayla's increased 'back of the mind' anxiety about 'fully' settling in New Orleans now she has kids. This is something that she considers every single day and at the time felt was affecting how she was going to settle down in New Orleans in terms of buying a house and how she would deal with evacuation for her children. This links to past research on how women worry about future disasters but importantly for this study, highlights the significance of stage in lifecourse when a disaster like Katrina hits. At the time of Katrina, Kayla was a young adult with fewer responsibilities. Although she rented her apartment, she did not own it and whilst she was displaced in temporary accommodation which was stressful, she did not have to rebuild her own home and as she brings up here, she did not have the worry of how to bring children up in an area that has a history of 'big' disasters.

Reflecting on what they would do now or what they would do in the future if a storm like Katrina happened again bought up some interesting perspectives from the participants. For example, Elizabeth who did not evacuate suggested that she would still choose to stay with her home in any future disasters:

> *"I mean for us, we had reasons as to why we didn't evacuate, but even if things hadn't have happened the way they did with my grandpa and stuff I feel like we still wouldn't have left. Because that was our home, you know, that's where we lived, where we born, we were raised there, it's our home and I would never wanted to*

*leave, especially in a time like this. So I feel like yeah good for whoever got out but more kudos to those who stuck it out" (Elizabeth)*

The reasons Elizabeth alludes to are linked to the timing of Katrina which struck when her grandpa who lived with her and her family became terminally ill and family from across the entire South of the USA came to stay with them. Katrina hit days after he died and the extended family, including cousins she had never met were still staying and no one wanted to be parted. However, Elizabeth still felt that even if her grandpa had not have died, she and her family would have chosen to stay because of their home was more than a house to her, their home was part of her life history in context of who she was as a person on an individual level and where she fit within her family. The house then, was part of her family. "Getting out" in terms of evacuating she saw as a good thing but what Elizabeth felt was more important were those who stayed with their homes which meant not being disconnected from her family as well as protecting the physical structure that helped to create her family. Loss of physical items, such as homes, is seen as a particularly obvious symptom of un-ness and disorder creating social failure but the meaning attached to home and other meaningful objects is not widely understood.

## Summary: A New 'Normal'

We see then how young women and their families overcame and lived through Katrina but we also see how in time disasters are forgotten, internalised, storied and became a significant part of their lifecourse and impacted their decisions as they grew up, moving from times of "un-ness" and abnormality into big decisions linked to growing up, but also that Katrina allowed for a new space to open up in their lives that made many question what kind of life they wanted to lead for themselves, with some even challenging what it means to be normal. In fact, rather than carrying on with their normal lives, Katrina forced a new normal into place that challenged their old decision-making processes and changed them as people.

Reflecting on the actual disaster events often bought up memories of "un-ness" in relation to 'normal' life, such as roads being blocked, petrol being sold out, motels becoming full and family conflict, particularly during the evacuation phase. These features link more closely to the features of crisis, as disorganisation, disorder, chaos and disruption (Britton 2005:69; Boin 2005:158-61; Quarantelli 2005:343; Dynes 1998; Jigyasu 2005:51; Kreps 1998; Rosenthal 1998; Smith 2005; Stallings 2005; 1998). Much ambivalence arose regarding the structures of state around protection that can broadly be described as 'safety.' Military presence for instance was seen as a combination of intimidating and

protective, inappropriate and necessary. Some talked about protection from the "crazy people" and there may be an implicit classism, distancing themselves from those who stayed in the city and those who evacuated.

Disasters, even though they have devastating physical effects are very much social events. Hurricane Katrina as hazard that became a disaster was shown to be caused by state failure to maintain infrastructure as well as deep rooted racial, class and gender divisions, putting some groups at greater risk than others. That said, Katrina affected everyone she touched and those who are usually not heard during post-disaster can also include those who are assumed to be privileged such as middle and upper classes. Here though the focus is on gender with youth and sexuality that can be marginalising identities, looking at what a disaster is from the experiences of this group of young women adds to the literature that disasters as defined through lived experience are likely to include characteristics that centre around personal life and relationships as well as work and livelihood, rebuilding not structures but lives and communities. It became clear during the evacuation, displacement and return stages that there are significant gender, youth and sexuality elements that intersect to give rise to increase feeling vulnerability, such as being 'out' at night in the city for young women as well as a blanket of protection, in terms of youth and gender for younger participants who were under the protection of guardians, such as Jay.

There was a window of opportunity but this only appears to exist for a select few. The window of revelation however was far more illuminating, drawing attention to the intersections of race, gender and class post-disaster. The significance of Katrina was a defining event in the lives of the young women who participated in the study but the processes that often caused them the most distress were family and intimate relations, at times exacerbated by displacement and sometimes their stage in lifecourse where decision-making processes were not entirely their own, or indeed, they were completely removed from. Regardless of decision-making power, young women characterised Katrina as a time of "un-ness" where normal life was completely disrupted but conversely, also a time where space opened up for reflection and personal growth to make their own decisions about their futures.

# Chapter 11: Gender and Disasters, Addressing what we 'know'

## Introduction

Gender and disaster scholarship provides a rich account of the complexities women face post-disaster, demonstrating that it is important to understand everyday lives in order to understand why people are vulnerable to risk and how these vulnerabilities are gendered (Bradshaw 2014). However, there has been little research about gendered lives and the lived realities of experiencing a disaster (Bolin et al 1998; Houghton 2009). Existing gendered power relations often position women differently to men (Enarson and Morrow 1997; Morrow 1997). It is what happens when we look at how intersecting identities, not gender in isolation that needs further attention. As identified early on by vulnerability scholars, where gender intersects with other identities, the disaster experience is likely to change (Blaikie et al 1994), some for the better and some for the worse and some still are relatively unknown. The intersections of gender with youth and sexuality are relatively unknown alongside a general lack of knowledge about the disaster experience as defined by though who lived through the event(s).

Hurricane Katrina has provided a window through which to view the effects of disaster as highly linked to existing vulnerabilities, including those based on group identities such as gender, race and class, the intersections of which are relatively 'new' in gender and disaster scholarship (David and Enarson 2012). This destabilises the assumption that it is a natural event that causes disastrous effects and was particularly well-documented academically in terms of gender (Youth Breakout; INCITE 2005; NWSA Special Issue on gender, Katrina and the politics of displacement 2008; Willinger 2008; Enarson and David 2012).

Whilst these wider effects provide valuable insights into what makes some more vulnerable than others and also contributes to the need to look at gender through an intersectional lens, the lived experiences of surviving and recovering from disaster remains relatively unknown. That is, we know very little about what existing power relations and identities 'do' to people as they attempt to rebuild their lives.

## Paying attention to Health through Acknowledging Mental Health

The relationship between gender and health has been widely documented post-disaster highlighting that women have specific sexual and reproductive health issues, most often the concerns lay within their maternal health particularly where women are pregnant and/or have young children or caregiving roles to other dependents (Gault et al 2005:11; Halverton 2004; Sultana; Enarson 2001b; Fothergill 2004; Kelley and Greenbaum 2012; Noel 1998:214; Sapir 1992; Ollenburger and Tobin 1998:102; Tockle 1994; WHO 2012). This often results in aid appearing to be channelled to women but the targets are actually children, resulting in gender and disaster scholarship being highly critical of proposed 'empowerment' effects of targeting gender through health projects. At the time of Katrina, in terms of literature and information, very little suggested that any specific health projects for women existed even generally but for this study, as none of the participants had children of their own, it was interesting to find out what, if any health services had been available and what they were like. Some participants were actually children themselves at the time (under 18 years old) and so I wondered whether they had benefited from 'women and health' projects. With regards to those who were 'older' (over 18), I wondered if their age as young women and their childlessness meant that they went under the radar in terms of their physical health. Overwhelmingly, my findings mimicked my own literature search demonstrating that there were very few services available, that if services were available, this 'group' of young women had not heard about them because of their class background, or that the services had not been promoted in channels that meant they were accessible.

Only one participant knew of a health initiative post-Katrina, and these were maternal and reproductive health services:

> *After Katrina I found out about Take Charge, a health service for women covering ultrasounds and pregnancy and smears and stuff, it's an excellent service for women to have. I haven't gone to gyno for years but I need to go there soon actually. That was a great opportunity that came up for me, they cover your hospital bills for pregnancy and I got health insurance too so [1 sec pause] (Jessica)*

Even though there is an issue that sexual services tend to focus on health rather than rights, Jessica still found this service helpful, financially and in terms of her sexual health, even now after she had 'come out' as queer, she talks about it in this quote as a service she still considers valuable and related to her own needs. This is interesting because whilst it is important not to reduce sexual health to maternal health nor conflate rights with health, in real-life experience, this service was seen as important and not necessarily linked at all to Jessica's feelings about maternity for herself or even with a maternal focus, not as

something she felt excluded her. That said, none of the other participants, including both queer and straight, had heard about this service.

The rest of the group did not know of initiatives to support any health concerns they might have had post-Katrina. Some participants displayed resignation to the lack of health services in certainty that in their school or local area, nothing was available to them as young women. For example, Elizabeth's response when asked about any health service provisions at school or in her community for women and/or young people was simply *"there wasn't"* and variations of this response was common across all of the interviews. A partial explanation for this could be that family oriented services may not be relevant to young women. Indeed, they may not have had any specific youth services prior to the disaster. Further, family planning oriented services for women could also exclude the specific needs of LGBTQI young women. It might also be that health was not an issue of concern for the young women who participated so that they did not try to find out what was available but the issue here is that for the majority of the sample, had not seen any promotional material about any existing or newly set-up services meaning that services that did exist, like Take Charge, were not known about. However Billie adds an interesting element about post-Katrina services that suggests that perhaps participants did know about services but did not see the services as relating to themselves, for example:

> *I think there were some [health services] for kids but most services were for really poor people not for middle class people who could get out of the city. I felt like they were probably overstretched already (Billie)*

Billie associates health service provision post-Katrina with those who could not get out of the city as those who really needed it, assuming that those who did not evacuate, could not evacuate because of poverty and therefore, during the aftermath were the people who needed support more than herself, who she saw as middle-class and therefore not 'in need.' Additionally, Billie saw the immediate response as overstretched which solidified her perspective that these services were not for her. So whilst some felt that groups were not targeted, for Billie, she meant other than those who 'needed it.' From Billie's perspective, her class group whose family were among the most affluent amongst the participants, did not need support financially.

Here we can begin to explore the notion of class as protection but a protection that is complex and not always positive. For example, what Billie is really saying here is not that she was protected by her class to recover from Katrina, but that there were many worse off than her. This points to a tendency in the study for participants to measure their 'devastation' recognising class as a measure of protection. What is interesting even further

in terms of Billie's story is that her Katrina evacuation story was one characterised by difficulty (which included homophobic bullying from her Aunt with whom she and her family were staying as well as a fear that another disaster like Katrina would happen again) to the point where she changed her future plans in order to stay in the city to try to protect it in some way:

> *I think Katrina is why I forced myself to go to a school I knew that I wasn't going to like. That was a really bad decision but that was cos of Katrina…Isaac was a lot more normal for me than Gustav. Gustav really tripped out my PTSD. I was like if New Orleans goes down I'll go down with her, this weird hero thing. I thought we could take one storm and come back from it but when Gustav came I didn't think we could. (Billie)*

Like the small studies within gender and disaster scholarship that highlight women's concerns include fear about the disaster happening again, concern for how they will support their families, friends and communities particularly associated to maintaining or recreating a sense of home and insecurities about rebuilding their lives (Ashraf Shah 1999; Enarson and Scanlon 1999; Tockle 1994) are echoed in the experiences of the young women who participated in the study along with other concerns that could be specific to lifecourse and highlight the difference where gender intersects with youth. For Billie, Gustav was more of a challenge due to the timeframe and how it revealed the psychological impacts of Katrina had not healed. The healing process for her was to take a further four years after Hurricane Isaac for Billie to able to let go of some of her Katrina-demons. This will be discussed in more detail below. Billie began to experience PTSD after Hurricane Gustav and struggled a lot to deal with the aftermath of Katrina in terms of protecting her city and her family. She decided not to go away to college because of Katrina, which is an immense impact on her life course decisions and links very much to the negative impacts Hurricane Katrina had on Billie's mental health, yet personally, she felt as though health services were not for her because she wasn't "really poor."

This theme was touched on by Beaux in the previous chapter where she recognised the devastation that was suffered in New Orleans generally as well as her own emotional suffering by herself and her family but she still did not see herself as suffering enough to the level of devastation that required state-support. Again, for Beaux, this is interesting because when the evacuation was in place, Beaux and her family lost communication with Beaux's mother and for two days, no one knew where she was, or whether she was dead or alive which was immensely traumatising:

> *The worst thing about the entire storm had to be not knowing where my mother was. When the news said that the hospital had been evacuated, I knew this was not possible. We had not heard from my mother yet. I knew she had to be in the hospital still. If she wasn't, she would have found a way to call us. The cell phone towers were all down so it was impossible to get a call out to her. I thought she had died (Beaux)*

Beaux's story continues further and links to another post-disaster theme about women's caregiving responsibilities post-disaster (Halverton 2004; Sultana; Enarson 2001b; Fothergill 2004) and intersects with the psychical trauma Beaux was having to deal with as a young women at only sixteen years old suggesting that when the burden of care does fall on the older daughter, it can have an even greater burden on them in terms of how they think about their familial and caregiving responsibilities which can also impact on health, both physical and mental:

> *"I had to stay strong got my little sister though. I didn't want her to be afraid...so I couldn't show any fear. I would cry into my pillow every night to let it out but I wouldn't show her I was afraid" (Beaux)*

For Beaux, the immediate phase of Katrina was horrific because they did not know where her mum was. She felt she had to put on a brave face for her little sister, all the while crying herself to sleep at night. When her mum was found, it was a huge turning point but the fact that this could have been a different story had a big impact on Beaux. What is interesting here is that instead of going down a negative path, Beaux, with the support of her parents made the decision to move out of state to finish her final year of high school at a school at the other end of the country, which actually improved her mental health as she was able to be herself which was something she struggled to do in the "big small town" of New Orleans where everyone knew her, she could come out as queer and feel in control of her experiences.

Whilst previous research tends to report the experiences of adult women, the findings in this study highlight that young women with younger siblings do feel they are in a position of care towards them as both Jessica and Sunny talked about their sisters as people in need of greater support, sometimes even their older sisters. Sibling relationships provoked various feeling in the young women who had them. These ranged from a desire to protect them, exacerbation at their choices or sources of support. Indeed, some of the young women took on new roles because of their younger siblings. Even though Sunny was not in New Orleans at the time, she felt she had to protect her sister and began taking on a new role in order to support her:

*"And my sister was just not in a good place, she was having break downs, she just could not cope so I was calling her bank and trying to sort stuff out for her." (Sunny)*

Jessica also worried for her younger sister, particularly with whether she would miss out on her education:

*"I was really worrying about my sister because she was in her senior year and I didn't want her to get held back…I tried to help her and motivate her" (Jessica)*

Elizabeth on the other hand felt the absence of her sister meant she had to try to be there for her mother but she also felt disappointed in herself because she could not cope:

*"There wasn't much I could do because of the state I was in. I was trying to get clean but it was too much at that moment." (Elizabeth)*

Whereas younger participants noted that parental care, particularly from their mothers affected their wellbeing, both positively and negatively during post-Katrina:

*"My mum wanted to keep us occupied to stop us thinking about it too much so she got us all these little bead art things…we had to have a big box cos I would just sit there, I needed something to do to get my mind off of it, so I made tonnes and tonnes of these little bead things" (Betty)*

All of the participants recalled stress and fear when they recalled the moment they realised that Katrina was going to be "bad." However, not all of the participants developed negative mental health issues. For example, Elizabeth actually turned her life around and went from an addict in her normal life, to post-Katrina stepping up to have a better life. Reflecting on Katrina, there was a sense from many that getting through it was a badge of honour, particularly as many thought they had achieved more with their lives and had a greater understanding of the importance of making good choices in life as life is short, and now, there is "something to tell" to future generations about what really bad life situations are like.

There is very little space opened up around mental health post-disaster despite many studies from psychology disciplines about PTSD although there appears to be very little gender focus (Van Griensven et al 2006; Bokszczanin 2007; Green et al 1991; Neuner et al 2006; Yamashita and Shigemura 2013; Yule et al 2003). Participants both explicitly reported feelings of trauma in addition to implicitly:

*Afterwards, after the storm a lot the mental health services were destroyed, imagine how difficult it was to find a therapist. I had been in treatment before the storm for depression and I was lucky to be able to continue that (Rita)*

Rita acknowledges the constraints that disasters bring in terms of disruption to existing services and viewed herself as lucky that she already had a therapist to help her through the trauma. Often the young women in the sample saw themselves as "lucky." Indeed, some judged that their class status prevented them from even seeking out any kind of extra support, as highlighted by Billie above. For Rita, who had grown up in a non-disaster prone state, she had never experienced an evacuation before, and the first one to go through was Katrina where it was "terrifying" that everything could be destroyed and she struggled with this immensely. She also had to move back home and this was challenging because of her strained relationship with her mother. Rita felt she developed PTSD as a result of Katrina.

Others felt guilty for surviving and this was particularly the case for those who were living out-of-state at the time, which culminated in anxiety and depression:

> *I did struggle a lot with depression after Katrina because I felt really isolated because I was in Chicago...It was on our first trip home and I had never planned to move back home and it was on our first day and we arrive and that night I remember crying like so hard like harder than I had in months and I just said to her I just blurted out to [my new wife that] I have to move back and that's actually when I started to calm down.*
>
> *I came back about 8 months after and I mean pictures just don't convey there's no way to know the feeling of driving down your home street and seeing the entire wreckage of peoples' houses piled up on the street or literally stuck in trees. A picture you can see but it's really different when you're just standing then and you know the smell and you think about your friends and family [3 sec pause] .There's an actual water line in my house. (Sunny)*

For Sunny, she experienced a distance-based PTSD and was among those who had the most negative connotation with Katrina as her whole life was up-ended because of it. Not being able to do anything from a distance but simultaneously being an anchor point of support. Her wife and new job being lost because she wanted to move back home and having to rebuild her 'adult' life in New Orleans as a queer woman. She also put other people's trauma in context in relation to her own, particularly talking about people who had lost everything, her sister who could not return to Nola because of the trauma (interesting about non-returners) as well as what is lost and how that affects people, like the lady in her creative memoire class who lost all of her dolls and linked to Jessica whose cherished books and memories were destroyed where the roof collapsed on her bed where she had put everything up like you're meant to do.

Many of the participants thought of themselves as lucky because they had not suffered a great loss, they did not have to go to the Superdrome or live in a FEMA trailer. This also implicitly relates to the provisions available to their parents for evacuation for younger participants and self-provision for older participants, both linked to social class. However, Katrina affected different classes of people as well and monetary provisions do not protect emotion (Enarson 1998). Sunny continues her story from above and highlights this with the story of her parents' evacuation and return, who she describes as middle-class but struggling middle-class and dependent on their work:

> *I think there were kind of like two sets of people there were those people who came back like right away like October/November they were back my dad was sort of like that but he had to go back because he needed to be working. He's a pastor and he had to be back for his congregation even though our house was uninhabitable it hadn't been gutted so he's like sleeping at our church that doesn't have a shower or anything and sleeping on peoples couches and then on the other side he was driving back and forth to Memphis to see my mum who was staying with my grandfather who was evacuated up there and she's a public school teacher and her school wasn't opened up yet and I wasn't sure what she was gonna do and I think she wasn't sure what she was gonna do.*
>
> *My dad actually had a heart attack on Christmas Day 2005 not a good day to have a heart because there were no cardiologists in the whole city because they were not here cos they had Christmas off so he couldn't be evaluated and had to stay in ICU (Sunny)*

Self-care is entering the arena in terms of humanitarian workers and some research exists in this area (Bennet and Eberts 2015; ReliefWeb 2016) but as the participants in the study demonstrate here, there is a great need to create support spaces that are open to all who have experienced and survived disaster. Participants in the study had plenty of ideas around what would have helped them at the time of Katrina. Young women are extremely resourceful and resilient and have made changes independently of services which is lucky as there were none.

Growing up after Katrina put all of the participants in a position of fear because Katrina went from an 'everyday' seasonal storm to a devastating to disaster very quickly and everyone who participated acknowledged that Katrina was "bad." Experiencing a disaster like this is thus highly likely to have an impact on mental health that is also likely to be experienced in a specific way for young women who are 'growing up.' Making life decisions changed after Katrina for all of the participants, in different ways and a part of

this was linked to their mental health. So whilst some felt that groups were not targeted, for Billie, she meant other than those who 'needed it.' From Billie's perspective, her class group whose family were among the most affluent amongst the participants, did not need support financially. The goodwill of others helps recovery, particularly coming from within the community (Elizabeth) and from big companies (Harrie and Jessica). This should be better prepared and more organised so that all can benefit equally as it was very well received and helped people recover with the "little things" like having space, i.e., two hotel rooms instead of one; some cash for a change of clothes as many didn't bring a lot with them so they were wearing the same clothes every day, a free meal in the restaurant and to feel 'normal' however, goodwill could have a threatening side, like with Harrie's experience with the goodwill stranger. This heightened her anxiety but that moment made her realise how vulnerable she was. Everyone except Elizabeth were displaced for at least a few weeks until the city re-opened and all those who were displaced experienced some level of stress. However, some participants returned home before others. Betty had a lot of strangers in her house and had to give up her bedroom at 13 years old. Thirteen is often an age where changes are occurring in terms of developing sexual and gender identities, although Betty did say she didn't think about sexuality or anything like that back then, the need for teenage privacy and private space to get changed for girls at that age is still significant and something her mum did not really think about. this is also linked to the frustration of not getting "a say" in what was happening and this also made younger women feel unconsidered and exacerbated their feelings of lack of autonomy, including Jay who always had to evacuate for every storm because of her mum's bf's job and also had a challenging relationship with him as well as her mum at times so being in a small space in one motel room with her sister too was a nightmare. Both girls found ways of dealing with this frustration and for Jay it ended up in a particularly positive way with her spending a lot of time exploring spaces and her artistic side, deciding that she would become a film maker. Betty's mum got her making lots of beads which helped her and Betty also said that having all these strangers around made her come out of herself as she was forced to be in social situations. Phoebe also did not associate Katrina with negative mental health for herself but rather as an opportunity to go away to college and take advantage of other 'free stuff' like getting dental work done which she could not afford before. Not to say that young women do not need greater consideration but that young women are able to deal with issues and make their own decisions even where they have little space to do so.

## Fear of Violence, GBV/IPV Post Katrina

There is much debate within gender and disaster scholarship over whether violence against women increases in reality or whether it is the fear and perception of violence that is heightened explained partly by the 'window of revelation' that brings GBV out of private life and into the public, open space so that it appears as though GBV has increased (Ariyabandu 2005:9; Eklund and Telliar 2012; Enarson 1999; Fisher; Horton 2012; Saito 2012:273; True 2013Houghton 2009; Horton 2012; Saad 2009; Stoler and Ager 2011; True 2014; Valdes 2009:22). Fear and perception of violence is also gendered (Saad 2009). Post-Katrina, a large body of work emerged showing a real increase in both (Begin 2008 ; Greeley 2008; Jenkins and Phillips 2008a;2008b; Jones-DeWeever 2008:2; Luft 2008a; Thornton and Voight 2007).

The contradiction between what was being reported by the media and what people who had stayed in the city during Katrina were saying was highlighted by Jessica earlier, demonstrating the complexities of real and feared violence. Above all, for some young women in the study, it was a feeling of violence that was all the more frightening as a young woman:

> *"I was terrified to do anything alone in the city after Katrina. As a young woman, I felt so vulnerable. Violence was at an all-time high. It was very scary. I even had my car broken into not too long after Katrina. That really made me realize how dangerous a city is with a shortage of law." (Beaux)*

Beaux' experience of violence is quite interesting in relation to Jessica's confusion about what was really happening 'on the ground.' The feeling of vulnerability for Beaux was frightening but the kind of violence she draws on to illustrate this was that her car was broken in to, demonstrating petty crime rather than rape and pillage portrayed by the media. That said, Beaux's experience of petty crime took place almost a month after Katrina whereas the immediate aftermath may have been quite different. Rita's experience on the other hand was the opposite where she felt that after she returned to New Orleans for her second semester at college to find some positive changes in relation to safety:

> *"In January when I came back it was still very surreal I think there was still a curfew. Pre-Katrina there was a lot more and we had the police captain come to school telling us where we should and shouldn't go at night. But immediately after there were hardly any people here so there was hardly any crime but then as most people came back it increased again dramatically" (Rita)*

Violence and city life can go hand-in-hand and Beaux experiencing her car being broken into after Katrina might be more linked to her now being old enough to drive a car than before she moved away during her 'Katrina semester.' for Rita, the link between violence

and city life was synonymous with normal city life in New Orleans. In fact, as a college student, Rita felt that New Orleans was safer at the time of her return period.

None of the other participants in this study associated Katrina with higher incidences of GBV or IPV explicitly despite a heavy military presence. Here Betty is referring to the increased military presence and safety which although she felt was necessary, she still found stressful. Indeed, in the same discussion, Betty was more concerned with other fears:

> *"Anywhere I felt unsafe? Not necessarily. It wasn't that I didn't feel safe it was just stressful. It was a very interesting time, the news and everything else, cos I was scared. I was scared, I was worried I won't have anything to come back to you know and everything changed, I was gonna live in Tennessee. I hate Tennessee (laughs)." (Betty)*

Coming to terms with a city and lives that would be permanently changed and the possibility of never returning home was more of a preoccupation for Betty than fear of potential violence. Again, this could also be related to Betty's age at the time of Katrina. At 13 years old, she talked of being protected by her parents and sheltered from the after-effects of Katrina, much like Jessica, so it is possible that she did not know about the media response at the time of Katrina. However, what this continues to bring up is the importance of the role of parents in shrouding teenagers from fear. What we will also see later though is the frustration and ambivalence young women feel about parental management of their lives.

None of the participants had directly experienced physical violence although Phoebe talked about her friends' experiences during displacement, highlighting the intersections of gender with sexuality:

> *"I heard that in Baton Rouge people were getting pulled over for stupid things but it was because they didn't want them there so there was a lot of racism and also anti gender stuff happening to people I knew. I was living in that nice house with those nice people so I was ok" (Phoebe)*

However, Phoebe had not experienced any GBV herself. Instead she talked about a supportive environment with friends and family. That said, fear of male violence is a structural gender inequality that affects most societies across the world (UN Statistics Division 2015; World Bank 2017; WHO 2013:2). Insidious violence (Brown 1995) is often internalised and dealt with daily so that it is part of everyday life:

> *"Violence has always been a threat in New Orleans but I feel like now that I am more out in the world it's something I have to watch out for whereas when I was younger I*

*was wither with my Mum and Sister or my Dad and there are corrupt cops out there too and it's sad because you're looking at these people as people who protect you and make you feel safe so who are you supposed to rely on to feel safe? A guy? Yourself?" (Jessica)*

These experiences point to the pernicious norm in many cultures whereby women are expected to put up with varying levels of abuse in addition to fearing men, particularly strangers as potential violators, disaster or no disaster. The uncertainty after Katrina may simply have created a space for it to be seen more clearly by the girls. What is interesting in some of the stories of the participants in this study is the link to the threat of GBV around being a woman in public spaces. For example:

*"I've been cat called and all that and if I'd have been a lone I would have been more scared than if I'd have been in a group. I look like a bad ass I think my size too it means people are less likely to bother me. As much as I hate it, it is something I have to put up with as a female. It's sad there's not education to teach men it's not ok to talk like that. I don't feel like it increased post-Katrina but I wasn't here long enough before so I wouldn't know."* (Rita)

Violence is not ruled out altogether and instead is discussed in interesting ways that suggest at least the fear of violence may be linked to increased autonomy, visibility as a 'woman' and/or 'queer' person and very much linked to growing up, all of which will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter:

*"I never go to my car on my own in Quarter at night. Like after a show or anything it's just not worth the risk" (Jessica)*

Going out alone is seen to be a "risk" at night in certain areas which is interesting in terms of the Quarter as it is often very busy and known as an LGBTQI-friendly area but neither made Jessica feel safe enough to warrant doing something that during the day would be mundane such as going to her car. Thinking 'sensibly' in terms of ensuring you are not alone as a woman because of the threat of sexual violence is prevalent in Western cultures and indeed many others worryingly, young women still place a significant degree of responsibility on themselves:

*I feel more conscious of it especially when I'm in drag like you feel more exposed to it when you go out at night (Harrie)*

Simply being out at night seems to be enough to implicate a young women if she were to be attacked but further being a young women in 'drag' costume for Harrie whose drag

persona is based around rap culture and explicitly masculine made her feel particularly vulnerable and more conscious of potential predators who could target her not just for her youth and female sex, but also because she was dressed in a non-normative role highlighting that when identities intersect, they can create a unique positioning that could have specific consequences for those who identify within that group. Coupled with reduced sense of awareness, young women feel even more responsibility:

> *We were just getting wasted so much but looking back I'm like I put myself in some dangerous positions being out at night and being so drunk (Sarah-Jane)*

Reflecting on drunken behaviour in their twenties, both Sarah-Jane and Margot seem to reflect back feeling as though they were lucky:

> *I really didn't take care of myself and I let myself do things and get into situations that were not good for me but a lot worse could have happened (Margot)*

It seems that fear of violence is something that we should expect as young women and should take measures to protect ourselves and if we do not take such measures, then we are lucky. It is the violence that is pervasive in our culture not violence as a result of a Hurricane that is still a very real issue for young women's movement, independence and autonomy. Jessica though felt that change needed to happen so that women could move about at night and feel less fear:

> *Self-defense classes would probably help me feel more safe. I've actually thought about doing something like that so if something did happen to me I could fight, not just lay there and cover myself, fight for my life (Jessica).*

It appeared that verbal abuse and fear of potential physical abuse was felt to be a part of being a female. This feeling of potential violence because of being a woman in a public space also has an age dimension with the younger participants feeling a sense of protection because they weren't out in public spaces alone or at all:

> *Me and my sister would always be with my mum and my dad so I didn't feel scared cos they were there (Jessica)*

Post-Katrina, research pointed to increase in GBV, particularly IPV (IWRP 2010). Gender and disaster scholarship across disasters also shows that IPV post-disaster is likely to increase in reality (Dobson 1994; Enarson 1999b; Honeycomb 1994; Fothergill 2004; Morrow 1997; Morrow and Enarson 1996; Palinkas, Downs, Petterson and Russell 1993; Stoler and Ager 2011; Williams 1994). Indeed, Jessica's story also supports these findings:

*My mum and dad had their like falling out they had already had problems in the past because my dad being like + not monogamous and all that he'd cheat on my mum a couple of times and he was trying to redeem himself. When I was in 8th grade and my mum was following my dad around and he was cheating and karma hit him and he had a really bad accident and now below the waist nothing works now so it's not like he can do anything but he was just really bad and just in a way my older sister she wanted to go back to where her husband was […] she didn't wanna stay and she left and my mum and my dad got into a huge fight about it and she realised then that she didn't want to be with him again. If there's anything [I'm proud of], I think though I'm most proud of my mum leaving my dad. For her to make that decision it was a really big inspiration for me, if she can do this, and then own her own business, even with English not being her first language and have us, then I can do anything. (Jessica)*

Disasters can result in both women being forced to stay with abusers as well as providing an opportunity to leave these abusers (Fothergill 2004; Jenkins and Phillips 2008). Displacement can bring uncertainty and place women in more vulnerable positions increasing the risk of GBV (Ariyabandu 2005:9; Enarson 1999; Houghton 2009; Horton 2012; True 2014; Valdes 2009:22). However, in Jessica's mother's story this was not the case. Displacement from the family home gave her a neutral space with more control resulting in the courage to end their marriage along with the strong support of Jessica and her sisters.

Just as there was goodwill and positive change, it is not without contradictions and ambiguities as illustrated by Harrie's experience when she was driving with her girlfriend to Texas on the day of the evacuation:

*I guess I wasn't this mother struggling with kids and dealing with that kind of fear but there was this one time on route to Columbia where we stopped off for gas and this man approached us. It was so dark and not many people around so it was already quite scary. He must have seen my Louisiana plates and he was like, oh my god are you from New Orleans are you guys ok down there? But I'd never felt like that before because I felt so vulnerable because like, I'm a girl and I have a girl in the car and this is like this man I don't know walking across to us from across the street. He was asking a bunch of stuff about how we were doing and I was telling him you know, trying to be polite, we're just trying to get where we're going, Sir. And then he takes his wallet out and tries to hand us this money, he was like I don't know if this will help but please take this. I didn't know whether he was trying to set me up or endanger me and I was so scared and I was like no Sir, I can't take it. And he could see the fear in*

*my face. It's so crazy to be that young and vulnerable and he was trying to explain it's not like that, please just take this money. In the end he put it on my truck and said I'm gonna leave it right there, don't let it blow away, I'm not gonna hurt you. And you feel really bad reacting like that but it was scary because you don't know who this is, you don't know what's gonna happen, you're in a strange place and he's this man and you don't know what he means with this twenty dollars. I was so thankful but at the same time he could see that I was terrified. Then he walked away and I was saying thank you, thank you, Sir so we did take the money but I didn't know what to do at the time, I felt so young and helpless. I was trying to be strong but I didn't know if I could really protect myself if I had to, in that situation. (Harrie)*

At 27 years old, Harrie was officially an adult when Katrina hit and as such, she made her own decisions about evacuation, choosing to drive down to another state where joint-friends of herself and her girlfriend, had said there were places to stay and plenty of jobs. The journey down was scary and she talked about a certain kind of fear, although differentiating her experience from that of a 'struggling mother' somehow implying that Harrie's experience was not as frightening as women with children. However, Harrie recalled a moment that revealed to her how vulnerable she was as a young woman travelling alongside another young woman, feeling as though they had no means to defend themselves or one another from a man who could possibly have had sinister intentions. 'Trying to be polite' was her only option to manage the situation, highlighting how the threat of gendered violence is so commonplace but women also feel paranoid that they might be overreacting to a simple gesture of kindness. Here the gendered relations of power are revealed. The man had money and was older, offering money to two younger women who felt they were vulnerable at a gas station with very few people around adding to the feeling of unsafety. Also interesting is Harrie's reaction to thank the man persistently, even though she did not know his intentions. Being both 'a girl with a girl in the car' and 'young' made her feel powerless even though she was trying to be strong. Dealing with the situation by being polite and demure was the only defence Harrie had in the situation she was in. had she been a man or with a man, she may have felt differently, although being young also clearly increased Harrie's fear of the situation. Harrie's story highlights the ambiguities around individual good will and the suspicions that can arise around these offerings. She also implicitly highlights the potential emotional and physical costs of good will where it is possible that there are other exploitative intentions. What is demonstrated here is that there are potentially very significant issues faced by young women that are specifically related to life stage and youth, gender roles as young women and sexual identity as queer identified young women. What is also interesting is that the

threat of a stranger was not something Harrie and her girlfriend has previously considered until they were faced with that moment of vulnerability and realisation that they had little to no protection should that man choose to try to hurt them. This links to the power relations surrounding gender, youth and sexuality which will be explored in greater depth below. Whilst this research did not find cases of exploitation, some participant did draw attention to others experiencing negative effects:

> *We heard about the rapes the people who went to Superdrome or stayed in the city. We heard stories about how these men would offer them food and then rape them. (Jessica)*

These may well be 'stories' but these stories true or false or somewhere in between highlight some key things about the participants in this study: when participants were younger and under the care of parents, their class status as upper or lower middle class, possibility sometimes attached to their racial and ethnic origins allowed a significant level of protection from these events. However, being an 'older' young woman could still position the participants in potentially dangerous situations, as illustrated by Harrie's story above at the gas station. Whilst no physical harm came to her or her girlfriend, the realisation that they were vulnerable and perhaps did not have the physical strengthen to fight off an attacker was extremely frightening.

The stories discussed shows that disasters are experienced in a highly subjective way (Quarantelli 1998; Perry and Quanrantelli 2005). So whilst for some, youth provided them with an element of protection when intersecting with other identities, for others, when youth coincided more closely with adulthood, feelings of vulnerability increased young women's fear of violence against them. Following on with the notion of subjectivity, some participants benefited from doors being opened for them, particularly around access to college that specifically benefited a whole cohort of young people but it seems that these doors were only accessible and known about to those who were already pursuing college. Conversely, for school aged young women, no such window opened but rather the effects on their educational circumstances could even be negative. Education, opportunities and issues will be discussed further in Chapter 10. The spaces traditionally "fenced off" though such as those events in everyday life are important to understand due to the importance of everyday life and how people cope with everyday life. Especially young women who point to negotiating a culture of the threat of gender based violence as part of everyday life as something normal as well as those young women in the study who also identified as queer and suggested that this also created a space for fear of potential violence against them.

Growing up post-disaster could increase the fear of violence but the fear of violence was more explicitly linked to city life with some participants feeling like New Orleans became safer after Katrina. conversely, what made participants feel less safe was being more 'out' in the world, either as a young woman or a young queer woman, demonstrating that there are important youth elements when thinking about gender and violence as well as sexuality intersections. It seemed that the younger the participants were at the time of Katrina, the more protected they felt as they were under the care of guardians. This is echoed in research by Doppler (2009) post-tsunami who found that parents were likely to take different emergency shelter options over camps to protect their daughters from the possibility of sexual violence against them. This study adds a sexuality, youth and different class element showing that the ability to evacuate also can lead to hidden opportunities such as the goodwill of corporations particularly motels but conversely, young women travelling alone can feel an increased fear of vulnerability, particularly from unknown male strangers, increasing feelings of stress and anxiety. Overall, rather than Katrina causing young women to feel a greater threat of violence against them, it was felt that being a young (and queer) woman was the greatest danger of all, drawing attention to existing cultures of harassment against women in public places that do not relate to disaster.

## Education: The Ambiguous Window of Opportunity or the Window of Revelation?

Research has long suggested a window of opportunity for positive change after a disaster, particularly for gender relations (Byrne and Baden 1995; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:94; Ollenburger and Tobin 1998; Weist 1998:17; Motsisi 1993; 1994a). However, there is little evidence to demonstrate any real change occurs after a disaster but rather disasters simply show us prevailing gender inequalities in a society and even reinforce them as people try to re-establish the old social orders (Ariyabandu 2009:11; Bradshaw 2014:566; Bradshaw and Linneker 2009:76; Mehta 2009:69; Oliver Smith 1986:100).

An interesting trend that emerged post-Katrina showing that their experiences of education depending on their stage in life course (whether young women were at school or at/going to college) significantly changed whether growing up after Katrina had a positive or negative impact on their education. Where young women of 'college' age were the beneficiaries was the decisions of many colleges to waiver fees and offer bursaries to Katrina-affected students, allowing for young women to travel and experience a new environment.

College-aged young women (aged 18-22) were able to take advantage of unique opportunities opened up to them by Hurricane Katrina. In addition to this, as 18 years and over and classed legally as adults (despite the legal alcohol age varying from 18-21 across states), there was often a lot less parental involvement in decision-making. What is demonstrated here is the changing lifecourse moving forwards as young women take their own journeys through their lives. Even though college-aged women were able to take advantage of opportunities, this was not without difficulty and as such, for some the post-Katrina period was more difficult, particularly where there were struggles of power such as family and intimate relationships. Gender and sexual identities became increasingly important in young women's lives through entering or ending personal relationships, coming out and managing their independent lives in college.

New Orleans colleges prepared for the onset of Hurricane Katrina as they have done for the many storms that came before her, many announcing their closures, planning for very short term evacuation:

> *At first, my college was gonna be closed til the end of the week and so it was kind of like oh you get a free week off school (Jessica)*

A "free week off school" in college, particularly at the start of the academic year is seen very differently to a week off from school in high school. College is not simply seen as a place to engage in education in order to achieve grades like high school. College is also seen as a learning curve for life skills and 'testing out' adulthood whilst still maintaining a connection to 'carefree' youth.

It is not unusual to experience this kind of thing in a hurricane-prone state like Louisiana and those people that are from the area often see storms as free days off:

> *In New Orleans we call it a "Hurrication." With Katrina they were making us all evacuate from dorms but usually like it's usual for college kids to stay behind at dorms and just party like in the French Quarter where they just never left. (Sarah-Jane)*

Sometimes it is even seen as an adventure and something exciting:

> *I'm thinking oh we're gonna be evacuated for like a week and we've been evacuated before it wasn't a big deal like I didn't think anything of it I packed a little bag of stuff…I was kind of looking forward to watching a whole load of DVDs and chilling like I'd just got the L Word so it was going to be like my L Word adventure season. It was really great that I brought the DVD player…and it still works to this day (Jessica)*

However, as it became more apparent that Katrina was a lot worse than any other storm they had seen in their lifetimes, the term hurrication was rarely used to describe the reality of displacement in relation to Hurricane Katrina:

> *Right after we heard about the mandatory evacuation my mum was freaking out a little bit and I was like we're gonna be ok (Jessica)*

What was meant to be a few days or a week of evacuated became a protracted displacement that was stretched out further than anyone had prepared for which meant new preparations through on-the-spot decisions had to be made but many students did not know what to do:

> *Students were like what do we do, do we continue somewhere else? We had heard universities were taking on Katrina people. But I mean we were scattered all over. My college is in a network of schools so all the other schools all over the country were opening up and accepting Katrina students tuition-free (Rita).*

After the initial confusion though, opportunities started to open up. It was not only Jesuit colleges that were extending goodwill to Katrina survivors. All over the entire USA, colleges were opening their doors to welcome Katrina Evacuees enabling young women to travel further afield:

> *I got school free for a whole semester out of state in New York (Phoebe)*

For Jessica, she was able to go to a different university in Greater New Orleans that was not badly affected by Katrina and re-opened quickly:

> *you know they like call it the Katrina Semester. Luckily we had found an apartment [nearby] and five minutes away was [one of the universities in New Orleans] I was like screw … [that other uni] so I ended up like signing up at there. When I was there I really started to you know find myself I realised that acting was what I wanted to do. (Jessica)*

Whilst some went to college for their "Katrina Semester" all over the county, others stayed close to home. This change still had a profound effect on Jessica's lifecourse. Similarly for Phoebe, having a "Katrina year" in her case, gave her space to find herself, although her change also included the necessity for geographic distance at the time:

> *I moved to New York after [Katrina]. I lived in [suburbia] and I always hated it, it's not like New Orleans and I could never meet anyone there that like cared about issues. I didn't know they were in New Orleans so I moved all the way to New York to find that so I just packed my car and went to school there (Phoebe)*

Both identify changing college after Katrina as a major change in the course of their lives that would likely never have happened if it had not been for Hurricane Katrina:

> *I had a great time and you know I got involved with this Honours advanced English class and I ended up taking these great classes and they offered the people that were in the Honours Society the chance to go to Europe and I chomped on that and I wouldn't have been able to do that without the FEMA money (Jessica)*

Jessica felt she would never had had this opportunity to travel if it had not been for Katrina because in addition to the new interests gained whilst she was at XXXX, she also had some money left from FEMA. However, this opportunity to travel and change college was not beneficial to everyone. For example, Rita, Margot and Sarah-Jane had moved to New Orleans specifically for college and then found themselves faced with the prospect of returning 'home.' This was particularly difficult for Rita and Margot who found themselves in a difficult and similar predicament:

> *I had to move once and I didn't want to have to move again and I especially did not wanna move back home with my mother (Rita)*

Family friction was the same for Margot, except this time it was her father:

> *I kind of have to be in charge of him like I still am now with stuff even though I'm here and that's fine but being with him living with him it's really... … it's a lot (Margot)*

Rita had already planned for a new change and instead of embarking on her new adventure she had to return to a college near to her home:

> *I had decided I was going back as soon as my school reopened and when they did I was back in the spring but for one semester I was living at my parents and commuting downtown. The school who took me was very, very generous and accommodating. They were very helpful [2 sec pause]. And they were a good school but I wanted to be in New Orleans. So my plans were upside down (Rita)*

The experience of changing colleges temporarily was highlighted by all the participants who transferred schools as a positive experience and commended colleges with how the situation was handled. However, starting all over again and knowing that it was only temporary put Rita's and Margot's lives in flux.

The findings indicate that Katrina had a significant impact on the lives of both school-aged and college-aged young women but in different and complex ways. Where, many college-aged young women were able to benefit from travel and other opportunities, although for some this meant returning to their home-states, those who chose to go elsewhere were

able to benefit from some hidden perks as a direct result of Katrina, school-aged young women, were negatively impacted Katrina in terms of their education..

All of the School-Aged young women in the study (aged 13-18) spent some time out of education when Katrina first hit. This varied from a few weeks to a few months. Due to the fact that Katrina struck at the end of August, most were preparing to go back to school and so Katrina hit at the beginning of the school year meaning there was a lot that they could miss in terms of their learning, especially when they were in the final or senior year of high school. Education at this level took some time to reorganise which is in contract to post-disaster policy to focus on the speedy re-establishment of education (Ackerman, Winthorpe and Greubel 2012; UNESCO 2012).

One of the fears for those who were at school was linked to this disruption which meant schools were closed, particularly when in the final school year:

> *That's what upset me about the whole situation like is my sister gonna be held back cos she was in the middle of the high school senior year where she had just started and like is she gonna be held back (Jessica).*

This kind of fear provoked different responses. Billie and her mother decided the best course of action was to enrol in a new school in the city they had evacuated to:

> *I didn't want to stay there [with her aunt] but we made the decision that I needed to enrol in school so I wouldn't miss out (Billie)*

However, this decision also had implications. Billie was able to attend a new school and therefore did not miss out on education, but this also meant that they could potentially be displaced for longer which for Billie was highly problematic as this meant an extended stay in their evacuation accommodation which was with Billie's aunt. Billie's aunt struggled to understand Billie's sexuality and gender identity and generally was a difficult person for Billie to be around where she felt that her aunt purposefully set out to make her life difficult and to change Billie into a different type of person. However, Billie knew she did not want to miss out on her education and she really liked her new school where she joined the band and spent a lot time reading at the library. Deciding whether or not to enrol in a new school also provoked other concerns, highlighted by Jay:

> *We didn't know if any creds would carry over and just the stress of it and everything (Jay)*

What is interesting about Jay and Billie's stories here is that they talked about the decision to either change schools or wait for their school to re-open as a decision that was taken

jointly between themselves and their parents. Being involved in consultation processes that affect their lives, was very important, particularly for the younger participants in the sample.

The findings of this sample showed that lack of information and the stress associated with changing schools temporarily meant that many participants and their parents did not choose to enrol them in a new school resulting in an extended time out of their education:

> *A lot of the schools in the area were really hard hit there was a lot damage, in my high school there was a lot of roof damage so they had to rebuild a lot of that. So school was out for a really, really long time. (Jay)*

Where schools re-opened before others and took in new pupils from other schools, particularly within towns that neighboured New Orleans:

> *In my town we really did get a lot of people from New Orleans when school started and everything like that because our schools started quicker (Elizabeth)*

However, there were issues and a lack of continuity, with some schools handling the situation well and providing their students with a calm environment:

> *My school was one of the first public schools to open so we got a lot of people from other schools too. They abandoned the uniform policy for like a year so it was more relaxed until it gradually got back to normal. (Jay)*

Even though Jay's school reopened relatively early compared to others, this also meant that her school was overcrowded because young people from other schools were attending temporarily, possibly linked to the focus of getting education back up and running as a priority post-disaster. What is also interesting though is how Jay talked about it being more relaxed with the 'no uniform' policy before it "got back to normal" suggesting that going back to normal times is not necessarily preferable, even though many talk about wanting to return to normalcy post-disaster.

Where Jay's school coped with the new influx of extra students relatively well, many schools did not cope well with the continued influx of students:

> *When school started there was a lot of chaos …actually it did kind of affect school a little bit cos we kept having people come in from New Orleans, and everything else and people were gone and it caused us to be really behind and everything else and it just like, it was just a lot of different things (Betty)*

Betty's story illustrates that where re-establishing school institutions post-disaster is not well managed, young people are likely to suffer in terms of keeping up with their studies and dealing with the disruption of people coming and going. What is important though is that as Jay's story illustrates, disruption and falling behind do not have to characterise post-disaster schooling if measures are put in place to help young people adjust and may even be as simple as introducing a 'no uniform' policy. Furthermore, being back at school was a welcomed dose of normality for all of the school-aged participants in terms of mixing with their peers and getting back into the swing of everyday life:

> *You look forward to school starting so you can know just how everyone was doing. So I mean you would meet new people and listen to them and how they feel about it and you just like, get one with it (Elizabeth)*

In social aspects, school acted as a place of solace. In fact, sharing stories with each other helped the young women in the sample to process what had happened. For Elizabeth above, having a shared experience of Katrina but different stories to share meant that it was easier to get back to daily life for Elizabeth to "just get on with it." Betty also looked forward to being back at school and seeing her friends but like Elizabeth noted the need to "just get on with it":

> *Once we were all back at school we were all excited to see each other, then it was like whatever. But just being able to go back to school and get out the house bought some of the normalcy back I was able to interact with other people. (Betty)*

What is interesting in Betty's story is that for her, when she referred to school bringing back "some normalcy," because she "could interact with other people" is actually not how Betty would normally have behaved at school before Katrina because of her intense shyness. Rather then, normalcy may have been going to school itself as an everyday routine that made her feel as though life was settling down but the practice of interacting with other people was something that Betty developed during the immediate aftermath of Katrina where she had to deal with strangers in her house and was forced to begin to become more sociable.

Returning to school was also identified as part of Elizabeth's "turning point" in her life and was something more than simply trying to return to how life was before but also to live a more fulfilling life:

> *I guess like after [Katrina] it was a turning point where I could have let my life like waste away because of this bad thing that happened with my grandpa then Katrina, but I just couldn't let it happen**...**After Katrina] I stayed out trouble, I actually made*

*good grades which I didn't even know I could do, I'm actually pretty smart which I didn't know, if I try. (Elizabeth)*

Rather than reclaiming normality, Elizabeth changed her life, particularly through paying closer attention to her education. This notion of being able to live a happier, more fulfilling and positive life is also present in Beaux's experience. Hers was slightly different to her counterparts as she was allowed to go away out-of-state to school to finish her senior year:

*After the storm hit I went to a different school up North for half of the school year but after that I came back and got to graduate with my friends at my school which was really important to me. It actually allowed me to become my own person. New Orleans is kind of like a big small town. Everyone knows everyone and it can be suffocating. Going somewhere new meant I could be myself (Beaux)*

Being allowed to go away for school not dissimilar to her college-aged counterparts but was still distinct because what was significant for her though is to maintain her connections to her old school. However, early independence was very important for personal growth:

*L: Was moving away a positive experience for you or did it have a negative side at all?*

*Beaux: More positive cos it reassured me I could be more independent. Before that I was scared about going off to college but then after I was like if I can do all that at 17, and be ok after that disaster [3 sec pause]*

Like Billie and Jay, being able to have a say in the course of her younger years was very important for Beaux. Indeed, the importance of being able to make decisions is evident in Elizabeth's story who chose to turn her life around on her own accord, change what was normal for her to something better. Being provided with the space to be in charge or meaningfully consulted in decision-making about their lives always led to a greater sense of autonomy for young women reflecting back. A further important finding here is around the way participants talk or refer implicitly to returning to normal but that 'normal' is not really what they meant. Katrina led to a positive change related to school for Betty, Jay, Elizabeth and Beaux because of the 'abnormality' of evacuation, displacement and immediate recovery. These positive changes were experienced differently but all led to the four young women feeling better about themselves based on decisions they were forced to make, although at times these decisions were more freely made about their lives. For Betty, the 'old' her was shy and would "hide away" but Katrina made her more sociable because she had to share her home with a lot of other people during the immediate recovery, which meant that Betty was more sociable at school afterwards. For Jay, she felt her

school dealt with all of the new temporary students very well so that school was more relaxed and enjoyable post-Katrina. For Elizabeth, she made a life changing decision to go from her normal life as an addict, to a post-Katrina life as "clean" and tried to do well at school, realising that she was "actually pretty smart." For Beaux, she chose to move away for her final year which also gave her the space to be 'herself.' So the 'normal' pre-Katrina life Beaux struggled to be herself in part because she was coming out as queer but found it hard to do so in the 'big, small town' of New Orleans but Katrina ended up giving her the opportunity for space away from New Orleans which she felt gave her option to explore and control her coming out experience, to become 'herself,' so that when she returned, she was clear about who she 'is' as a person and what she wanted to do with her life.

A further interesting theme to emerge was the importance on stage rather than age in lifecourse and how closely linked this is with education. The transitional phase between 17-20 being particularly contentious. For example, summarising the story so far in the interview, the researcher mentioned this 'in-between' period with the following statement-question:

> *It's kind of a crazy time too I think cos you're just like not quite close enough to 21 to really get anything but not close enough to child to submit to parents. It was a very frustrating period. Cos age itself like at that time in my life I don't think it changed things as opposed to the [school] 'year' I was in at high school. Like the sophomore year is that whole year where you're awkward and just trying to figure things out, about how I felt about certain things and then the next year in my junior year I became less socially awkward (Jay***)**

Jay highlights that 'stage' and age did not necessarily correspond neatly, particularly stage in life in terms of school is what is significant. Participants aged between 13-20 were struggling to make sense of 'knowing' they were not 'adults' and therefore had to follow the wishes of their parents but also that they did not identify fully as children. Whilst it can be said that the school year also relates to chronological age it is the subjective experience of that particular school year that makes it significant and not the actual age.

Change, transition and increased autonomy all arise in Jay's story and she identifies these transitions to be closely linked to specific school years. It is not unusual for young women to pick out periods of awkwardness and 'growing into oneself' during high school but the point here is that these feelings do not automatically correspond with being a specific age but often corresponds with choices, decisions and experiences, particularly at school.

School is one of the most significant institutions in the lives of teenage young women and during a disaster, it is one of the key spaces that experiences disruption. All of the young

women of school-age reflected back on Katrina as significantly impacting school life. Some were concerned that they would miss out on credits or knowledge needed to progress in their lives which led to participants enrolling in other schools. This had its own implications such as extended displacement. However, the alternative, to wait for their schools to re-open also had its own issues due to the varying lengths of time their schools were closed. Both choices involved stress, anxiety and worry. That said, all participants welcomed going back to school, seeing school as a place of normality, friendship and support. Interestingly though, all of the young women had changed in some way, such as Beaux and Elizabeth who had both "come out" as queer, Betty who had become more sociable and Billie and Jay who were pursuing journeys of self-discovery which also involved gender identities. So normality did not mean going back to the same, Pre-Katrina lives at school; normality in terms of going back to school then meant familiarity and recommencing everyday routines associated with the stage in lifecourse, here that is going to school. At school there was normality in reconnecting with friends and finding support in commonalities around experiences of evacuation and relief as well as realising that some had experienced much worse and indeed others would never come back. Where schools took in students from elsewhere, participants talked about overcrowding and some schools were better equipped than others to deal with this. Where schools struggled, participants felt that they might have missed out on normal education but where schools had the resources and skills to manage the influx, students felt secure. Settling back in to everyday life was very important and for some school-aged participants, they also talked about living more fulfilling lives. This was facilitated by going to a different school like Billie and Beaux or changing personal attitudes about their lives to be more positive, like Elizabeth. A commonality running through the theme of schooling is access to decision-making. The young women here talk more confidently about school around the time of Katrina where they were involved in the choices made about their lives in a significant way. This demonstrates that even though school-aged young women are classed within the category of 'children' they feel themselves to be 'growing up' and welcome space to be able to make decisions but are often forgotten about or not considered by adults even though "just asking" might be enough to make them feel valued. Indeed, this further reflects that stage in lifecourse intersects greatly with age.

What these findings demonstrate is that youth changes the disaster experience but so does different stages within youth when linked to stage in education training. Further to this there is a class element where young women who were already in or planning to attend college that year gained significantly more opportunities than women who did not have the means to access college education prior to Katrina. College-educated young women

already in employment post Katrina also found some hidden perks as a result of Hurricane Katrina whereas women working in service and tourism industries faced greater struggle.

## Stereotypes, Norms and Visibilities

Gender and disaster scholarship has been critical of the view of women as victims as well as the focus on their only capabilities as linked to traditional roles of caregiving (Enarson and Meyreles 2004; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:81). As discussed above and highlighted in the literature, women's organising has been well-documented and proven to have powerful impacts on community recovery, drawing attention the fact that women need to be seen and see themselves as more than "just women" (Fordham 2009b:184). What was discussed by participants in this study was that they did not have to be limited, rather than be "more" than just women, many decided to rewrite the script of what it meant to be "just women" for themselves as individuals:

> *Well I felt like I could really live my life how I wanted to, especially doing the homeless thing and it was after Katrina that I became polyamorous so I guess it was kind of affecting (Phoebe)*

Phoebe was clear that her age as a young adult impacted how she experienced life post-Katrina and the decisions she made but she was also making decisions as an individual and did not have the decisions of siblings to worry about. When asked whether this made her feel in charge or helpless she responded:

> *Like take charge I guess" [Silence – 5 sec] (Phoebe)*

Taking charge and making decisions that benefited young women as individuals was an interesting theme to emerge. Despite being stressful for Betty, who used to be very shy, because a lot of people were staying at her house in the aftermath of Katrina, she also looked back and felt that the challenges contributed to her identity seven years later:

> *You'll never guess it now but I used to sit there and I wouldn't say a word, until somebody talked to me. Now I'm in this situation where all these different people are coming in so I had to try to break out of my shell as much as possible or I'm just gonna go nuts, I guess it kind of made more of a, it kind of helped my personality I would say, with other people, I can talk to anybody now. (Betty)*

Reflecting on the achievements of going through something very stressful enabled Betty to highlight a personal journey of growth. Some explicitly identified that these changes would not have been possible had Katrina not happened. For example, as discussed above, Billie made the decision to stay in New Orleans rather than go away to college as a result of

Katrina which in hindsight she felt was a bad decision but one that she had to make because of the impact Katrina had on her feeling that staying in the city would help to protect it. Indeed, when I first met with Billie in May 2012, she was still struggling to come to terms with her decisions and still felt that Katrina had a hold over her life but that she was working through ways of coping with her choices. But when I talked to Billie six months later in November 2012, she was excited about how she had gone from 'coping' with her choices to taking charge:

> *How I wound up here now making this decision is because of Katrina but the decision itself is happily free of it cos I've figured stuff out now. (Billie)*

However it is also noted that decision-making as a result of Katrina was not always positive. At the same time, how the longterm effects of 'bad decisions' ultimately provide a positive space. This is because Katrina opened up new spaces, both psychically/subjectively that also allowed for freedom of movement such as access to colleges in other states which led to confidence and new experiences:

> *Katrina really made me see things differently like before I was gonna be going to medical school. All my family has been in medicine in some way, so there was always that push. Then the hurricane hit, and I had this choice to go to one place or to go to another that was more theatre. I can't not follow my heart. (Beaux)*

Prior to Katrina Beaux and Phoebe did not feel like they had been making decisions in their lives that would make them happy but would make other people happy but Katrina instigated a change. Change is possible and whilst it is true cultural mores are stubborn, it is also true that these norms and stereotypes created are not immutable (Mehta 1009:70). The participants here demonstrate though that change is most meaningful at their own individual and personal level:

> *It was a very long intricate path to that, each story is like a dot in an impressionist painting but if I had to pick one crucial moment for that, that 21 days in that hotel room talking to friends online, my online friends, film making forums and stuff that was when I realised that I wanted to make movies. (Jay)*

Young women have shown that their ability to cope post-disaster goes beyond passivity and actually lead to creativity and innovation in some cases and in self-empowerment in others but this was also under a great pressure to be grown-up:

> *I think a lot of us were expected to grow up faster than we had wanted to. For us, as opposed to like older people, we as kids weren't used to working, weren't used to doing manual work and stuff. During that time when it all happened we had to grow*

*up. You had to grow up, you had to do labour, you had to get a chainsaw and cut the trees down you had to go make money because , my dad worked at the plant and the plant was shut down your parents were out of work so you just kind of like, you step up and I think they expected a lot of us to do that. A lot of us did but a lot of us just fell off. (Elizabeth)*

The findings of this thesis clearly show that young women and teenage girls face very specific struggles due to their stages in lifecourse where they have more or less degrees of responsibility for decision making in their lives and in the lives of their families. That said, there is a case for women's adult experiences as distinct from those of their younger selves, particularly through having children themselves. Processes of 'growing up' then are related to childhood and adulthood but they are also situated and context-specific. This means that young peoples' experiences of growing up are not universal and as illustrated by existing research, the changes and experiences that occur as young people grow up can be shaped by specific communities, cultures and societal expectations (Hill-Collins 1997; Leadbeater 2001). Here Elizabeth highlights that disasters can create the space for processes of youth to be missed as the literature on experiencing massive social change suggests (Bucholtz 2002) but also, she and others point to the benefits of this on reflection:

*"With any kind of tragedy it makes a person grow up more cos you learn things and you grow, and how sever it can really get and I did kind of have to grow up a little bit." (Betty)*

Recognising that their stage in lifecourse was significant in the process of Katrina is important because it shows that young people can be impacted in very specific ways.

Due to the fact that 'traditional' orders often place women in caregiving and altruistic roles, there is often a feminisation of responsibility for care of others placed on women (Bradshaw 2014:568). This means that when talking about women post-disaster we are not talking about all women but only some women or specific activities associated with women. This has created a vacuum of missing women, identities and activities. Furthermore, it creates normative responses that increase pressure on women to behave in certain way or invisibilise women who do not behave in this way. For example, Billie felt:

*I felt like I had to be a certain kind of person and I think I had a high expectation on myself to be a certain kind of person for my family that I don't think I would have had hadn't it been for Katrina I might have been more carefree but I felt like I had to be part of that unit. I think that was probably a part of it. (Billie)*

Recent interest in masculinities (Enarson and Pease 2016; Luft 2016) is interesting in part because masculinities seem to be presented as complex and as such presenting the need to explore men and maleness with a great deal of reflection that has yet to be attributed to femaleness and femininities (Bradshaw 2014:559). By neglecting the complexities of femininities, we will not see how norms can blanket over the complexities of 'female' roles. This will be explored further in Part Six.

## Summary

In Part Five, the thesis has presented an exploration into the lived experience of disaster through the eyes of a group of young women, suggesting that how they defined the events of Hurricane Katrina were broadly linked to crisis and personal growth.

Drawing on gender and disaster scholarship, the thesis has added to some of the existing themes. Whilst allusions to youth had been made in the literature very little explicitly looked at young women's interpretation of key processes and trends post-disaster. The findings from the fieldwork shows that young women have different experiences post-disaster and that these experiences are impacted by other processes such as stage in lifecourse and class and other identities such as sexualities in addition to gender.

Across the lifecourse, what is important in daily realities of young women's lives may not necessarily reflect what we know about women's lives post disaster because much research takes the perspective of adult women. Other research frames women's concerns alongside girls, as "women and girls." However, in recent years the concerns of girls, specifically adolescent/teenage girls have become better documented (Plan 2013; Tanner 2010). Further to this, it is also recognised that processes such as class, poverty and culture can colour the knowledge about gender and disasters and as such, not all literature will be relevant to all adult women. The same is likely to be the case for young women and as such, the findings of this research may reflect the disasters experiences of those in particular sociocultural locations. However, daily realities are thought to be significant in post disaster settings and have a specific impact on women generally. These daily realities also inform the decision making choices and capacities of women generally. However, young women may not have the same options for decision making particularly when their stages in lifecourse are defined as dependents.

Breaking down stereotypes and a greater reflection on femininities and femaleness is much needed in gender and disaster research, as has begun to take place around masculinities (Enarson and Pease 2016). Here there is space to reconsider the norms that

position women unequally in terms of vulnerability and risk as well as strengths and capabilities. Within this, there is a need to unpack the myths created, even from good intentions, in order to fully understand the complexities of gendered experiences. As feminist disaster scholars suggest, it is important to keep in mind the relational nature of gender, the power dynamics within those relations and the inherent link to sexuality, often framed from a reproductive and maternal lens.

# PART SIX

# YOUNG WOMEN, GENDERS, SEXUALITIES AND DISASTERS: NEW STORIES TO TELL

In Part Five above, key themes across adult women's concerns were taken as the reference points in which to explore young women's experiences and interpretations, finding that the intersections of youth, gender, class and sexuality alter the lived reality of growing up after a disaster compared to adult women. In Part Six, this thesis presents new directions in gender and disaster research. Young women themselves are the reference point drawing on gender and queer theories to examine their experiences. Here, a 'queer' analysis of gender is used to understand what happens when young women grow up in the wake of a disaster.

Here, some of what we know about women is unpacked and explored through the experiences of young women and also through young women's sexualities, both queer and straight. Particular attention is paid to the intersections of youth with gender and sexualities to challenge stereotypes, break down barriers and create space for different voices. Using Rich's concept of the 'heterosexual matrix' (1983) that positions queer women as unnatural or as non-women, this study highlights heteronormativity and how it is challenged in lived-realities though exploring young women's activities in a drag performance group in New Orleans and young women's discussion around femininities, gender identities and sexualities.

Firstly, the thesis explores what we mean by women, engaging with Judith Butler and Queer Feminist Theory. It can be said that post-disaster, women as a general category are seen as a distinct group, having different experiences than their male counterparts and it is important to maintain this distinction to reflect women's differences as well as their similarities (Anzaldua 1990; Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:94; Jayawardene 1986; Mohanty 1993; Moraga and Anzaldua 2015; Saldivar-Hull 1991; Rubin 1975). What is needed is to further explore the differences between women. Here it is echoed that the continued goal is to better reflect the lived realities of women's lives looking at gender relations and intersectionalities (Brah and Phoenix 2004; Crenshaw 1989; Yuval-Davis 2006). In the past feminist theories have made truth claims about women's universal

oppression through identifying discriminatory processes such as patriarchy and providing a framework in which to challenge this, known as feminist standpoint theory (Harding 1993; Hartsock 1983a; 1983b; Smith 1974). However, it was soon pointed out, by feminists themselves, particularly 'third world,' black and lesbian feminists that women's oppression is complex, demonstrating that not all women are oppression in the same ways or at the same times (Mohanty 1998; Jayawardene 1986; Lorde). It is therefore important to understand that different identities, such as race, class and sexuality can change the experience of oppression, and indeed, privilege. Pryse highlights the need to understand identities as plural and as a "latticework" (2000) and can be put into words through Kimberle Crenshaw's 'intersectionality.' However, taking gender as the starting point can mean that other identities are 'added in' which can create a hierarchy (Hill-Collins 1990). Social positions are shown to intersect and be intrinsically connected, not hierarchically but messily to make visible the multiple positionings of everyday life and the power relations that are central to it. The findings of this thesis demonstrate that youth and sexuality and at times, class, change the experience of 'womanhood.' That is, the reference point 'identity' changes often with either youth or sexuality framing their experiences alongside class and gender identities. This study in particular demonstrates the differences around young women's interpretation of what is natural in terms of hazard events, gender and femininity.

Secondly, the needs and interests presented are those of young women and teenage girls rather than from the perspective of adult women. Through exploring young women's stories from their own perspectives and how they talk about the different elements of their identities and experiences, the notion of collectivity is built on as well as problematised, drawing attention to the need for individual space. Identities exist in a matrix whereby it is not always clear which are most important at a given time (Hill-Collins 1990). In fact, the matrix intersects to such an extent that it is not always possible to speak of a general position for women. For example, the young women who participated in this study occupy multiple identities which include differing gender, sexual, class, racial and ethnic positionalities. Drawing on the findings of this study as well as the literature on disaster subjectivity, each participant will have their own understandings of post-Katrina life. That said, there are some common threads weaving the participants together as a sub-cohort generation. They are positioned by their youth as powerless; by their sexualities as invisible, by their genders as vulnerable and by their class as privileged. Instead of looking at these multiples as conflicting and endless and as Cixous put it "unanalysable" this thesis shows that interpreting sites of multiple identities is fruitful as well as challenging to the status-quo of generalised knowledge because these unique

combination of identities were found to intersect to create specific positionings post-Katrina.

Thirdly, Part Six will explain 'drag king and gender performance art' as a post-disaster space for queer expression and positive transformation, particularly for young women. The focus is on young women as youth seemed to be common that 'auditionees,' king troupe members and audience members were young women at the time. However, it might be interesting in the future to explore the Kings as the members 'age' and also how older audience members might feel about the connection to youthfulness or how they feel about accessing these youth-led spaces. Sexualities, alongside genders are taken as the reference point to explore whether this focus can reveal anything else about the disaster experience that is not yet known. Analysing young women's experiences of growing up post-Katrina as queer by looking at them through the lens of the heterosexual matrix shows how binaries are constructed and how young women are breaking them down to consider other genders. The findings here suggest that there are different levels of 'naturalness' that intertwine but are also distinct. There is the conceptualisation around the hazard itself and the recovery periods from the hazard event, problematising which events are the real disasters, often then flowing into discussions around gender and sexualities, particularly framed by 'growing up' and lifecourse decisions.

New Orleans provides a unique setting to explore young women's LGBTQI and/or queer communities and identities because New Orleans is assumed to have an affinity with queer communities and among the many monikers given to 'Nola,' is referred to as the "gay capitol of the south." What makes it more interesting though is that New Orleans also has an ambivalent relationship with queer sexuality due to the fact that in the broader Louisiana state perspective, queer identities are not widely accepted. For example, gay marriage is not legalised and it is said in media sources there is a culture of police violence against the LGBTQI communities (INCITE 2007;McGill and Plaisance 2013). This kind of ambivalence could also affect how young women feel about their sexualities, but as yet, little is known. As pointed out by gender and disaster scholarship, much of what we know needs to be built on further but also that key areas of invisibility exists that affect what we do know and what we do not. These gaps result from the perpetuation of norms, stereotypes and the myths that result from them, however well-intentioned these might be, as gender and disaster scholarship and feminist scholarship highlights more generally, there is always space for reflexivity and growth. This research hopes to explore how young women engage with their sexualities, both queer and straight, in the context of a city that is known for liberalism but that is situated in a conservative and religious region of the United States.

# Chapter 12: Girls Interrupted, Growing up post Katrina - "Katrina was like my coming out story" (Jessica)

Queering enables attention to be drawn to ways of seeing and being in the world from another position. Through 'playing' with boundaries and crossing them, Queer Theory unmasks cultural constructions of sexuality and gender (Jagose 1997; Halperin 1995). Linking Queer Theory to a disasters lens where disasters are also seen as processes that unmask cultural and social issues or boundaries outside what is seen to be 'normal life' provides a framework through which to see disasters as equally queer events.

In Chapter 12, this study explores young women's "coming out" stories which are taken to mean more than coming out as gay and demonstrates that there are other closets or boundaries that young women emerge from which include changing their 'old normal lives' for a 'new normal' whereby the young women in study could "come out" of Katrina in positive ways, also revealing the tenuousness of normality.

Where queer identity is seen as outside of heterosexual normativity (Jagose 1997), disasters are seen to be at odds with day-to-day, normal life. Disasters therefore have the capacity to destroy the rigid parameters of everyday life also so that what is seen as socially and culturally typical can be replaced by "something odd" but even though that 'something' may seem odd to others, it can result in feeling the opposite to those that experience it where identity seems to come together and 'fit' in ways it had not before, then challenging what it is to be odd or feel awkward:

> *Well, [my mother decided to raise the house] more of exploiting the use of grant money than a concern for flooding (laughs) but yeah so she notified her neighbours over and over again with the plans and she got the permit and the house goes up and the neighbours freak out sending nasty emails and getting aggressive. So she's been the target of this aggressive campaign as a single woman living alone in this house so I felt like I kind of had to step in I mean my younger brother is 12 he can't really deal with that, or do anything. So I went to live with her for two weeks and people were still leaving things on her car. And that was actually a good thing cos my whole life I've felt kind of awkward like this large, kind of masculine but not really in my family, I'm really responsible I'm the one who people cry on and I didn't really fit in but then I went to stay with my mother and I was like oh, I'm the older son, I can really protect my mother, I can help her, not that my mother is helpless but I am 6 feet tall and I weigh a hundred pounds and I can throw somebody across the room so my mother*

*doesn't have that and I can actually give her something that she needs and it's not awkward. (Billie)*

Billie's experience above tells her story of post-Isaac, where Billie was 22 years old and shows that as she explored her identity post-Katrina, even after seven years had passed, up until the point in the story above, Billie's idea of who she is and her mother's idea still did not align so that Billie felt awkward and that she did not fit inside her family. For Billie, outside of her family relationships, she was seen as "the responsible one," the person who "people cry on" but in her family, her tall height and masculine physique did not match up to any roles 'available' to her in her family context so that she was not 'seen' in a role that fit to who she felt she was. Outside of the family, she was seen as a person of strength. Finally, during this particular stay with her mother a few months after Isaac, she was finally able to be the person she felt she was in her non-familial relationships, strong and reliable in her family context as well. Because she could "protect her mother," she found a way to fit and also a way to explain to herself who she was in the family, the elder son who could contribute her physical strength without feeling awkward as she had done before. Not only did Billie find her 'place' within her family, she also found a name for the role she now filled suggesting there was a disconnect between who she wanted to be and who her family wanted her to be that was a struggle for both 'sides.' Finding a language with which to speak helped Billie to understand herself better and importantly, for her mother to understand her too. She had found a way to be needed in a way that "fits" and was not "awkward" signifying that there was an important turning point for Billie's mother's understanding of Billie's identity, that she had accepted Billie for who she is. What Billie's story shows is that even within her family's seemingly rigid role-setting, there was space to change what was normal for something different but that in reality, worked in greater tandem and had a far better positive outcome for all involved.

Key informants in the study suggested that of all the queer youth identities, it was trans-youth that faced greater risk to vulnerability post-Katrina due to pre-existing discrimination (Youth BreakOut, field notes 2012). For example, Billie, who identifies as trans, experienced homophobic bullying during her displacement where she was staying with her mother and younger brother at her aunt's house out-of-state. They stayed with the aunt for about four months, during which time Billie enrolled at a local school but also during this time, the aunt began to make a series of homophobic and transphobic comments against her because of Billie's sexual and gender identities, neither of which she had ever even discussed with her aunt previously:

> *"It was like am I a lesbian or whatever, and they were like making me a lesbian without asking me but there's nothing wrong with being a lesbian if that's what you are [but I didn't know] as I hadn't thought about it. One time she was like if you go to the library you're not going to find the kind of books you want to read and I was like that's just kind of an odd thing to say, it didn't have a specific history behind it and it really freaked me out." (Billie)*

The above quote from Billie was just one of many incidents that occurred between herself and her aunt, highlighting what a terrible experience it was living with her aunt during a time that was already stressful. In fact, the stories about her aunt could be seen as the" disastrous consequences" of Katrina for Billie as these incidents of bullying framed the entire period of her displacement. Whilst Billie did not describe this act as discrimination or even as bullying, she did make reference to the stress and upset her aunt's attitude had on her. As an older female, Billie did not expect her aunt to treat her this way in addition to the fact that she was a family member. Not only did Billie feel that her aunt had acted inappropriately in her role as an adult family member, Billie's aunt was also projecting her views about what is and is not moral and therefore 'normal,' implicitly relating this to Billie's physical appearance and fashion choices. In fact, every element of Billie's life was under her aunt's scrutiny. Rather than supporting Billie, her behaviour left Billie questioning her identity before she chose to do so herself. Here we can link back to the lack of support services available for LGBTQI youth and additionally, a lack of understanding amongst family members that can be detrimental to the wellbeing of young people (Almeida et al 2009; McDermott et al 2008; O'pry 2012). It also links to the notion of household discontent and family tension that can be exacerbated or amplified post-disaster.

Research shows that family acceptance is very important for young people who identify as queer (O'Pry 2012). Indeed, many of the queer-identified participants in the study, worried about family reactions to their sexualities, which always contributed to delayed 'coming out' as well as 'staying in' the closet:

> *I'm still struggling with that [coming out to parents or trying to date a girl and hiding it from the family] but hopefully later when I'm out of my parents' house I'll be able to hopefully! I'm still like living under my parents roof so, like if my mum found out I did drag, she would, (puts on a whispery southern accent) "Why do you want to go around dressed up as a boy, what is wrong with you? Dehdehdeeeh! You'll never find a man if you keep hanging out in gay bars I'd much rather my life in New Orleans cos I'm more open and free but at home I'm still like in that box (Betty)*

For Betty, who was only 13 when Katrina hit, "coming out" at that particular time was linked to coming out of herself, going from being very shy to becoming more sociable but it was a few years later she began to explore her sexual and gender identities. Above, she is discussing how she felt at the time of the interview about revealing her sexual and gender identities to her parents which she highlights as one of her greatest struggles. Within this struggle around the potential for family rejection was feeling like she could not fully be herself because, now 19 years old, she was still under her parents' roof. This highlights that Betty's stage in lifecourse made it very difficult for her to be herself most of the time. The main thing she worried about was not specifically about "coming out" as queer but was linked particularly to her gender identity and around her involvement in drag, raising specific concerns about what her mother would say about it if she knew. Here Betty raises her own preconceptions about what her mother thinks are important for Betty's life, not dressing as a boy but rather to find a boy to have a relationship with shows how Betty's desires for herself could be quite different from her mother's desires. Moving out of home for Betty then is not just another process of 'growing up' (Green 2010) but is also about being able to be more open because at home she feels as though her family's version of normal life puts her in a box which excludes who she feels she really is as a young woman, especially her gender and sexual identities. Stage in lifecourse, even where it is linked to normal transitioning of becoming an adult can carry greater meaning for young women who do not see themselves as normative in terms of sexual and/or gender identities, as further illustrated by Jay:

> *"Being at that stage in my life rather than being older, like 25 or something made me feel quite powerless especially with everything I was feeling, regarding my sexuality and gender it was just one of those things that makes you feel powerless and is also part of the fear that if you talk to someone and it doesn't go well like depending on who they are in your life can affect things down the road like even if you think that person is your friend they could like tell your parents or other people and your family and they're not ok with it it's another issue you have to deal with so it was very much a feeling of powerlessness." (Jay)*

Katrina came at a time when Jay was questioning her gender identity and exploring her sexuality. She specifically felt that had she been an older young adult, she would have greater control and power, the latter of which she felt entirely the opposite, mentioning powerlessness multiple times in relation to her gender identity. Powerlessness for Jay was linked to fear; fear of being "outed" or "outing" herself as transgender and whether the people in her life, including family and friends, would accept or reject her. Furthermore,

she also worried specifically about confiding in friends, fearful of who they might tell. Telling parents, as research suggests is a major concern for queer-identified youth. Jay echoes Betty's concerns about family members rejection of sexual and gender identities "at odds" with their existing family structures and also draws attention to other people in her life outside of family, expressing her fears around "coming out" to others. Jay's discussion of powerlessness links also to Billie's earlier account about her aunt "telling" her she was a lesbian before Billie had even considered it herself, therefore removing decision-making power for Billie, something of which young women in this study have consistently expressed as something they needed in their lives in order to feel considered as well as having power over their own lives. For Jay at that time, it was her gender identity that was most important to her but also it was her gender identity that caused her the most fear and powerlessness because others might not accept her into their vision of what is acceptable and therefore what is normal. This could mean that Jay began to be positioned on the periphery as an outsider because she could not speak about her 'secrets' in the way that her peers might be doing because for her, the implications of those secrets being revealed and "coming out" could have vastly negative consequences to her family and friendship relationships.

Phoebe on the other hand took a different approach and had come to terms with this break and in many ways she made this decision herself:

> *"I knew people that came out to their families and were like please, please accept me, but I was never like, I took a different approach, if you make me feel if you disown me because of who I am, then, like a lot of my blood family I don't consider family" (Phoebe)*

Phoebe's approach was not the norm but she highlights important issues around the whole notion of LGBTQI and/or queer identified people having to 'come out' in the first place as opposed to their heterosexual counterparts who have to do no such thing:

> *I had a girlfriend for like two or three months during high school and my father was kind of weird about it and I think he kind of figured it out and he was like I don't approve of this lifestyle you're having and I couldn't figure out whether it was my lifestyle of having a girlfriend or my lifestyle of living in his house and never coming out. I still to this day do not know. I have no idea what [my dad] thought was going on with me and Hannah, we had no problem at school, she bought me cookies every day and we would sit together at lunch and I started to get more and more stupid on sugar and aspirin for the headaches. Nobody bothered us or anything. And some people who have turned out to be lesbians or queer women we now talk on Facebook*

*I mean none of us have actually come out to each other or anything, but it's like we don't need to. ..It wasn't til I was in college when [my dad] said to me you didn't tell me you were gay and I was like who told you that, he was like you're aunt she assumed everyone knew but I was like well I'm not gay, I don't really have gender preferences I just like people. (Billie)*

What Billie's recollections draw out in this quote is around heteronormativy and its results and impacts on her life. Firstly, Billie discusses her dad's "disapproval" about her lifestyle that, because she had not outed herself as queer, she did not know whether it related to disapproval of her sexuality or disapproval about her not coming out about her sexuality, indeed, Billie never found out what her dad was referring to or what he thought was "going on" with Billie and Hannah. This is important for interesting ways related to parents decision-making on their parental practices and responsibilities and may identify an unexpected co-benefit of same-sex relationships for young women in terms of being able to make more of their own decisions about how they spend their time. To elaborate, had Billie brought a boy home regularly and not disclosed her relationship with this boy, her dad may have put rules in place limiting their privacy purely based on heteronormative assumptions about boy/girl relationships. On the other hand, Hannah and Billie, both girls had no sanctions placed on their private time together because their relationship was, at first, assumed to be platonic and then, because Billie refused to come out, continued to be policed by heteronormative boundaries, othering their sexualities but paradoxically, giving them more freedom in their intimate decisions.

Alongside this unexpected co-benefit, Billie discussed her experience at school which rather than highlighting heteronormativity, highlights young people's refusal to be defined by its boundaries. Billie's view that she should not have to come out as it is not necessary, they "didn't need to" but among friends and to-date, it was something they all knew about each other without having to make a statement about it, just like their heterosexual peers who also do not have to "come out" as straight. By refusing to come out, Billie and her friends transgress the norms placed on their sexual identities by heteronormative culture that by coming out, places their sexuality as non-normative. Whilst historically, coming out meant something entirely different, such as raising awareness that people can be "gay and proud," "here and queer," Billie's cohort at least did not feel the need for this distinction.

Finally, Billie also tells the story of when her dad finally did confront her about her sexuality, years after his vague "disapproval" comment, when Billie was at college, her father decided rather than to ask Billie a question, to make a statement and "call her out"

as gay in much the same way although perhaps less maliciously than her aunt had many years previously but with the same premise of normality based on heteronormativity that Billie, as queer and thus non-normative, must "come out" as such, must mark herself as not heterosexual and therefore not normal. It is less surprising that when Billie questioned her dad on this calling-out that it had come directly from her aunt who again has told what was never hers to tell and by extension, misrepresented Billie's sexuality. Here we can see heteronormativity in how it has been used to reframe Billie's sexuality in the lens of the viewpoints of others, demonstrating their own boundaries of what kind of 'deviant' sexualities they will recognise, but in relation to Billie's aunt, not accept from her own bigoted point of view. Without Billie's aunt stirring the cauldron of rumour and misrepresentation, Billie might have been able to talk to her dad on her own terms and when she was ready, or chose not to.

'Growing up' journeys were not simple and were still ongoing at the time of the interviews seven years later and two of the processes most troublesome for young women were sexual and gender identities, illustrated here by Jay who was reiterating her struggles with displacement, gender identity and sexual experience:

> *Jay: Yeah [Katrina] was probably around the time when [sexuality] was coming to be important. , I had a really high sex drive so it was like a concept that was significantly important, it was when I started looking for porn and stuff like that*
>
> *Lisa: Was that helpful?*
>
> *Jay: Yes and no. it was certainly helpful in hindsight like it taught me that I was not monosexual but at the time it was very like confusing and conflicting I ended up feeling a lot of guilt and a lot of periods…I mean granted I wouldn't even come out as being Bi until much, much later even with friends and stuff but if I assume all the reactions I got when I did back then then I probably could have gotten support but um I was worried about that and worried in general cos I was also trying to walk this line of being the person that my dad wanted me to be and being the person, and my dad's a pastor so you can imagine what that would entail or what that would not entail so I spent a lot of time in denial. I figured keeping it online was one thing but if I told just one person that would make it more real and stuff*

Jay's story above highlights the complexities of struggle when both gender and sexual identities feel as though they clash with the norm leading her to hide her feelings, only exploring them online, particularly through online porn and then feeling ashamed, guilty

and rather than helping her to feel ok, made her go into a constant state of denial in her real life, constructing her online persona as separate and not real. It was only with years of hindsight that she could look back and say that it helped her to understand one aspect of her sexuality. A key issue for Jay was that she was concerned she would isolated from family and friends through not fitting with what she thought was acceptable, this was particularly linked to her father, linking to prominence of specific kinds of normativity, including heteronormativity, but in Jay's case, also a moral normativity. Her biological father, a Pastor loomed large in Jay's interpretation of self, concerned that she had to walk a line that can be seen to have two sides: one the one side, there was Jay's vision of what her father wanted her to be and on the other, there was Jay's own vision of what she wanted for herself, but recognizing that what she wanted was different, even though it made sense to her, made her stay on this line, where she could not be herself but nor could she be who she thought her father wanted. Eventually, Jay did confide in friends and this has positive outcomes in that they were very supportive, demonstrating that even though peers can apply pressure to conform, peers can also accept 'difference' more readily as they do not necessarily see some identities as different. This is also supported by Billie's story above.

Sexualities are also tied up with gender identities but that does not mean that at times, sexual identity is more important that gender identity and vice versa. In fact, negotiating gender identity can be particularly challenging, as famously noted by de Beauvoir in the 1950s, "woman is made, not born." In fact, gender identity has a long history of exploration in feminist scholarship has focussed on representations of the body in culture, particularly problematising 'femininity.' A key body of work demonstrates the necessity of performing the correct feminine self, which can vary cross-culturally but is always defined by rules, responsibilities and behaviours (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1999; Covino 2004; Hollows 2000; Jackson 1995; Mabrey 2006). The findings of this thesis shows that young women can have an ambivalent relationship with femininity, recognising that there is such a thing as 'correct' femininity:

> *Over the years my mum has tried to make me like her perfect daughter. Cos me and my sister we are nothing alike. I had long well you know cos you saw before I cut it all off I had long brown curly hair for 19 years like very girly and I loved my hair I was chubbier then too that was one of the things people knew me for my big curly hair, like a pageant girl, mostly my mum's doing. Then I finally got to the point where I needed to cut it off, something needed to change. (Betty)*

Here, Betty distances herself from her mother's understanding of a perfect daughter as a Southern Belle and at the same time distances herself from her sister who is openly gay and like a tomboy. Neither identity was suitable for her physically. But this vision of femininity did not suit how Betty felt inside. Breaking away from her mother's view of femininity and finding her own way was something Betty felt she needed. Gender identity can be just as difficult as negotiating sexuality and one could sometimes seem to conflict with the other.

Indeed, research by McRobbie (1994) on young women's engagement with lifestyle media highlights that young women are conscious that there is a 'kind' of femininity that one is expected to adhere to but that it can have negative impacts on their wellbeing. For Margot:

> *I didn't have any respect for myself or my body and I was really struggling with figuring out who I was. I punished myself a lot and it took a lot of time to stop doing that to myself, letting these things happen to me. I feel like women can be very destructive through our bodies through drinking, sex, how we treat our self. Like our value is in our sexual availability and what we look like. But then I fell into a new group of people who really helped me stop doing this and stop pressuring myself to do what I should do and just do what is right for me (Margot)*

What Margot's story demonstrates is that growing up can be a struggle and for young women who identify as heterosexual, sometimes normative femininity can be a struggle. She felt that specifically being a woman made her treat her body destructively because she did not value herself, she only saw her value in her sexual availability and how she looked physically, neither of which she was happy with and so she became more destructive. Recognising this was Margot's first step to change and to "come out" of being destructive to do what was "right" for her. Coming out then is not always about coming out as queer but can also be coming out of a negative sense of self tied up to negative practices tied to modern-day femininity with which she measured herself.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the study explored growing up through the eyes of young women as they negotiated their sexual and gender identities, demonstrating that becoming any kind of woman can be linked to struggle. Struggle was particularly linked with unconscious desires (Rose 2005) and how these desires conflicted with what young women saw as normative and what they thought others in their lives, particularly family members, saw as normative. Within this type of heteronormativity, coming out as queer or as a lesbian can be particularly difficult. Many of the young women had what can be described as "queer" experiences in that they felt, at times, as though they did not fit.

Through engaging with the 'heterosexual matrix' (Rich 1983) that positions queer women as unnatural or as non-women and in this study also including young women who struggled with heterosexualities, this study highlights that heteronormative views and norms affect how young women and teenage girls feel about themselves and their sexual and gender identities, particularly where they identify or are beginning to explore queer identity. By taking the perspective of young women and recognising that identities exist in a matrix whereby it is not always clear which are most important at a given time (Hill-Collins 1990), this study unpacks young women's positionalities to show that negotiating powerlessness is highly complex.

The study explores how young women negotiate their gender and sexual identities as they grew up post-Katrina, demonstrating that lifecourse decisions are specifically altered by age but often that gender and sexualities become important to young women as they get 'older' and many find struggle in both. There is a significant gap in gender and disaster knowledge around intersectional identities, particularly age, stage in lifecourse and sexualities and this study demonstrates that young women and teenaged girls are both important groups to consider in their own rights, particularly supporting them to build their gendered-sexualities in positive settings. This gap signifies that there is much to do and this study draws out the tenuousness of normality through exploring everyday life through the eyes of young women as they grew up post-Katrina to show that what is normal is not a static reality but is in fact mutatable, changing and tied up with young women's sense of self which include gender identities and sexualities.

# Chapter 13: Youth in Paradox: Relations of Power and Space "Katrina allowed me to have a coming out experience that I could control" (Beaux)

### Growing up and making decisions

Young women's positionality in lifecourse particularly draws attention to the need for youth to be seen in relation to adulthood and childhood rather than in opposition. Whilst the seesaw of growing up will ebb and flow, eventually youth will turn into middle-age. How young women and teenage girls relate to childhood and adulthood is not discussed in disaster research, despite important studies alluding to the need to understand the experiences of young people (Fothergill and Peek 2008). The findings of this thesis show that desire for young women and teenage girls to make their own choices is much more important in teenage years where decision-making power is often held by parents and/or guardians. As young women gain more autonomy, decision-making can be troublesome and is not necessarily seen automatically as a good thing at times with some young women wishing they had made different choices. Young women in this study began to make important life choices for the first time as young adults such as relationships and processes that effected the shape of their lives with nothing to compare to as everything is new. Furthermore, post-disaster exacerbates this time because social networks of friends, family and community are often disrupted through evacuation so the decision making process is a lot more isolating. Young women then are different in terms of their lifecourse experiences which can position them in a strange way because they are not children but do not have the same responsibilities as 'adult' women often characterised as heterosexual, married and with/expecting or wanting children.

Research has highlighted that youth-adulthood is partial, inconsistent and contradictory (Valentine 2000). This contention is clearly illustrated in many the stories of the young women in this study, Some participants in the study talked about what can be seen as 'key' processes of growing up such as going to college, which can include going away to college:

> *I was supposed to start [my first year in college] the day Katrina hit so I'd had orientation and moved into dorms. On the Saturday I was out with my roommates when my parents called and said we have to evacuate now. It was a weird time cos I was in this period of transition, moving out going to college, the first extended time*

*away from parents. I'd just got my head around all that and then all my plans got set back (Rita)*

Rita was settling in to her new life in a far-away State that was now to be her home for four years and looking forward to being independent for the first time in her life as she would no longer be under her parents' roof. At the beginning of this exciting and unknown journey, the day before her parents were due to take the journey home, the mandatory evacuation was put in place and instead of beginning her new life at college, Rita had to go back home with her parents. This was not what she had planned for. She had planned for this transition into becoming independent and it was already a "weird" time because her normal life at home with her parents had come to an end and she thought she would now be experiencing something entirely new. Now her life was going backwards but at the same time, she was meant to be growing up and getting her college degree so she was left in a kind of limbo space.

Space to grow up as a person to become an individual was seen as a significant part of growing up with or without a disaster. For example, Jaz had moved away to a different state many years earlier for college because she felt that New Orleans could be a suffocating place to discover your identity, particularly when that identity involved a queer sexuality:

*I just needed that space at that time in my life and when I came back I wanted to be back this is my home it's in my blood. (Jasmine)*

Phoebe on the other hand moved away to college as a result of Katrina because she would not have been able to travel so far without the post-Katrina goodwill of wavering fees and offering bursaries to Katrina evacuees. Being able to go away to college and be somewhere entirely different gave her the opportunity to discover her identity:

*I didn't realise how I identified as a combination of male and female til I went to New York and I really tried to figure it out. (Phoebe)*

Beaux, who was only 17 at the time of Katrina also gained a unique opportunity to move away for her "Katrina semester" in a different school where she could explore her gender and sexual identities in a place where no one knew her or her family so that there was a lot less pressure on her to move at someone else's pace:

*Going away to college [because of Katrina] I was also about to discover my gender identity. I became more comfortable with myself because I was discovering myself at my own pace. New Orleans is like the biggest small town you will encounter. Everyone knows everyone and it's easy to dig up someone's past. Moving away*

*allowed me to start from a clean slate. I didn't have expectations. People didn't know where I had been. They just knew what I was presenting them. This allowed me to explore and find myself. (Beaux)*

Moving away for college can be a key part of growing up and becoming your own person regardless of whether a disaster happens as illustrated by Jaz. However, for Phoebe and Beaux, Katrina provided them with the opportunity to go away that they would not have had without Katrina meaning that they could explore their sexual and gender identities on their own terms. For Rita though who was moving to New Orleans for college to start her own journey of self-discovery, the opposite was true where her plans were reversed and she had to move back in with her parents. It is likely that many out-of-state students had to relocate back home for their first semester in 2015. Indeed, Megan and Sarah Jane also moved home temporarily but they were in their second year of study and both returned to the city without re-enrolling elsewhere which is what Rita did. Being in the first year may change how young women and young people decide what to do about their education during times of disaster and this would be interesting to explore further.

Making decisions about relationships could also be a challenging experience for some of the young women in the study and for Harrie in particular, Katrina exacerbated existing issues:

*At the time my girlfriend Trudy and I were having some issues with our relationship you know lesbian drama and her not wanting to be monogamous anymore. I think she evacuated with me to make things work but we knew it wasn't there. We were in another state just trying to make the best of it.*

*I evacuated thinking it was gonna be a mini vacation so I went with Trudy to visit my mum's boyfriend in so I left my four cats who are like my babies behind with my brother to take care of them because he was staying with my grandpa down the street and wasn't going to evacuate. We stayed there before the mandatory evacuation when my brother called and said Grandpa and me have to evacuate so he had to leave my cats there because he didn't have enough space in his truck. As soon as we were allowed to go back I got the first shot in. People were telling me not to go. They were saying it's chaos and you might get shot and whatever but I went back anyway cos I had to see my cats.*

*Trudy came with me and at the time we talked to our friends Roberta and Hannah who were in Alabama and they said to come there cos there are jobs, there's a place to stay. My girlfriend really wanted to go there but I really wanted to stay with my mum. I was like I'm kind of having to take care of you right now, I'm the one paying*

*for things so I don't know if that would be the best idea but she kept talking it up so we went; me and the four cats and the girlfriend hightailed it to Columbia. (Harrie)*

Harrie and Trudy were already having relationship problems but Katrina forced them together in a different way and Harrie wanted to try to save the relationship too but it ended up defining her Katrina evacuation in a very negative way. From early on, Harrie did not think it was the right decision to go to another state where their friends were thinking it was better to stay put with her mum and her boyfriend where they would have a place to stay that would not cost them money, especially as it was Harrie who was providing the economic support for both of them as well as much of the emotional support for Trudy who was in a bad head space at the time. Harrie was in a transitional period between two spaces where she had to make a decision but it was a decision she had never had to make before at 26 years old about a relationship that was struggling. Having intimate relationships is a part of growing up but so was ending a relationship. Katrina forced the pair together during evacuation at the early stages and Trudy relied heavily on Harrie who wanted to make the relationship work so even though Harrie would have made a different decision if she was on her own or indeed, if Katrina had not happened at all, she chose to listen to Trudy and they travelled to a different state with Harrie's four cats in tow. This was also part of the difficulty in the decision for Harrie as two of her four cats do not travel well and she loves them more than anything in the world. Her responsibility for them was something she needed to consider as well as trying to make Trudy happy. Responsibility for pets is not something she would have had when she was younger in addition to her relationship demonstrating that Harrie's stage in lifecourse as a young adult old enough to have responsibilities and decision-making power could mean that young women make decisions based on the needs of others rather than themselves.

Billy's story highlights how geographic space of being at home (not displaced with a difficult family member), role within the family and stage in lifecourse intersect to produce a different experience of a hazard that has changed over time:

*My role in the family has stabilised a bit now that I'm living with her but my mother does not respect my diagnosis [of ADHD]. I was having an argument with her because I want to go to school out of state, I want to get all my paperwork cleared and go out of state and finish somewhere else. Somewhere cheaper somewhere with nicer people, somewhere where you know all the (----) might be arseholes but I don't know that they're arseholes. She then was telling me why I was upset and why I was suicidal and that wasn't it, and she does this thing where we've been having arguments since I was 10 about whether I have ADHD and she had finally said I can get help but as long as I don't do it with her money. There are some things I need her help with like*

*getting up. I need to be physically standing from the bed and out of the bed and I need her help with that but she thinks she knows better than I do about things to do with me. (Billie)*

Billie changed her original plan to go away to college and stay in New Orleans because of Katrina which became a problematic decision as she was still in close proximity to her family, particularly her mum with whom she struggled to get along with and they often clashed about what was best for Billie. The issue with her mum was explicitly related to decision-making power and her capacity to enact on her own decisions but Billie's mum often felt the opposite to Billie and Billie felt her mum would not support her but rather if her mum did not agree, would restrict access to resources Billie felt she needed, as exemplified here when Billie wanted to get an official diagnosis for ADHD. This is interesting because Billie is among the most affluent of the participants but it is her family not her personally who holds the purse strings. This raises an important insight into assumptions that might be made about affluent young people's ability to cope in times of disaster and times of normalcy where their parents are not willing to support the decisions of their children and withhold financial resources.

Lack of independence and feeling like they were not provided with a choice was frustrating and for many of the younger participants and this led to the feeling that parents had a lack of understanding around taking into account their needs and agency:

*I'm not saying it would have made it better, maybe less stressful if I'd have been more aware and understand better what was going on. (Betty)*

Betty's story here highlights that young women, especially teenage girls between 13-18 years old have a specific experience post-disaster around their lack of agency and decision-making power in the family. This lack of decision-making power makes the disaster experience more stressful and Betty highlights that simply explaining the situation would have made things less stressful for her. This demonstrates that even without being provided with options simply being made aware of what was happening would have been enough for young women to feel less powerless.

Desire to be their own 'person' and for their parents to understand them as autonomous individuals was important to young women:

*My parents are very academic and their idea of a plan is more like that, but mine is more enjoying life. (Beaux)*

This statement also refers to making decisions for their own happiness rather than for their parents even though it can result in conflict. However it also demonstrates that

parental engagement with their teenage daughters is essential to helping them feel included in decisions and allowing them to have a voice and opinion. Parental challenges are not unusual after a disaster and indeed, as people; parents have increased issues of their own to deal with. The findings of this study suggest it is important not to underestimate the willingness of their daughters to be involved in decision-making and even though young people do need protection, they are also not little children and deserve consultation:

> *Even after I moved out they were still trying to control my life. It's part of why I moved really far and it made them realise that I am a whole person and I think I gained a lot of respect from them for that…It also taught me, like I needed to know that I could do stuff. (Phoebe)*

However, some see this conflict between themselves and their parents as a necessary stage in growing up. For Phoebe, breaking away from her parents control meant that she could become her own person and also earn respect as a grown up. Young women are uniquely situated within family conflict particularly as they grow up and are legally able to make their own decisions, it is not always easy.

**The Complexities of Space: Collective and Individual Spaces**

Collectivity has historically been associated with feminism and feminist activism, particularly through consciousness-raising. Individual space on the other hand, has been associated with isolation and powerlessness limiting things such as women's mobility and choice (Corcan-Nantes 2003; Cornwall 2003; Fisher 1993; Rashid and Michaud 2000). Furthermore, in feminist media research, some have suggested that individualism perpetuates neoliberal discourses of inequality and encourages women to passively consume as well as feel negatively towards their bodies (Covino 2004; McRobbie; Gill 2007). However, other feminist media scholars have problematised the assumed passivity of women's consumption, suggesting that women negotiate these spaces in an active way and therefore, must be problematised. Within disciplines such as Feminist Media Studies, Feminist Ethnography and Humanities have demonstrated that claiming personal space and time is important and empowering for women and rather than passive consumers, women are actively negotiating, challenging and rewriting the texts in their own images and has been particularly well-documented within Audience Reception Theory around women's fiction reading practices (Acosta-Alzuru 2003; Ang 1996; Ferris and Young 2006; Mayer 2003; Nilan 2001; Radway 1984).

Individual space has yet to be fully explored in a disaster context broadly although some literature has emerged on the need for self-care among humanitarian aid workers which would include individual space (Bennet and Eberts 2016; ReleifWeb 2016). Gender and Disaster context specifically has yet to engage explicitly with this kind of notion of space. As discussed in the literature review, women's wellbeing is often associated with collectivity such as community leadership, empowerment and political efficacy (Bari 1998; Enarson 2000a; Enarson et al 2007; Enarson and Morrow 1998; James et al 2014). That said, there is a small body of research that highlights that individual space can be much appreciated and provide relaxation and time and space away from family responsibilities (Saito 2012). This suggests that collective and individual space might need to be linked together at times (Saito 2012:270). This study found that collective and individual spaces intertwine and both kinds of space might be important for young women and teenage girls during times of disaster as well as times of 'normalcy.'

Post-Katrina, existing women's collectives were highly active, including INCITE and Newcombe College. Additionally, new collectives formed, including Women of the Storm. Others struggled. The Lesbian and Gay Community Centre took some years to reopen. Post-Katrina little space was organised to support young women to come to terms with the events. Many young women in the study noted how important these spaces would have been for them. They bought up different kinds of space. In this chapter, a different kind of collective will be explored, The Kings, a gender performance troupe:

> *"Well I guess one of the primary things we will have to discuss before AND after Katrina is drag. Cos I was involved with the drag troupe officially since 2004 [pause] is that true? It must be true [laughs] and that was when I was just performing at that time. The show looked – different to it does now it was a lot more loosely held together it was based a lot more on friendship though which I guess is a stronger bond but the show was a little loose and the way that you got into it and how money was handled and everything was a lot less official and a little more rag-tag and a lotta fun. But when we came back from Katrina we had lost a lot of performers. Either they didn't want to do it anymore or they'd moved or they were temporarily displaced but there was a small band of us.*
>
> *Because Jaz and I were together at that time so we had both lost our jobs, we both lost our living situation and we were just sort of stuck together with nothing in particular to do [laughs] living in variety of odd places none of which required us to pay rent so we did nothing but discuss drag [laughs] and not just performing but trying to organise it, seeing who was in town and seeing whether people were coming*

*back. So we started with 5 drag kinds plus Jaz so 6 of us were here immediately well by October.*

*I went down to the pub one night because we had nothing to do. We had nothing to do but drink [laughs] and the pub owner said they had people show up on Tuesdays, on weekends, asking when we would be back on so we were like alight, let's put this thing back together.*

*Our first show back was on November 15th I believe and there were 5 drag kings and we did a full show so there were 12 acts and you can imagine it was total chaos with only 5 of us and there were a couple of group acts you know." (Kayla)*

The Kings was originally based loosely on friendship ties prior to Katrina but even though friendship ties still exist, the structure of the troupe has changed since they re-started after Katrina. Existing research shows that in USA context shows that post-disaster grassroots activism is often a result of existing female friendship networks (Neal and Phillips 1990). Back then, in the 'pre-K' days, The Kings were a "rag-tag" jumble of friends in New Orleans, all sharing a passion for female drag. They all wanted to be and became 'Drag Kings.' They were also a highly popular weekly event at the well-known 'Place' in the French Quarter. Historically and to this day, they take the 'midnight show' slot on a Tuesday night. Before Katrina, they were always packed. As one of the only events catered towards queer women and Trans people, it was an important weekly event on many calendars. Compared to gay male venues and events, queer women's entertainment and social spaces are far less (Richards 2010). The Show was a place to see and be seen. To meet, to dance, to flirt, to be a gay, queer, bi, curious or any kind of girl surrounded by the queerest of things: women dressing up as dudes and bio-femmes miming lyrics or lip-syncing, dancing and grinding their way across the stage. Many current performers are also ex-audience. Many other audience members used to go alone until they got chatting to someone from the troupe or other girls and woman in the audience. The audience is mixed in age, but mostly younger – the 'under 30 somethings.' Prior to Katrina, the way the troupe was structured, organised and run was also very different. Originally, it was run as a group of women interested in drag, tied together through bonds of friendship. There was a loose hierarchy with a show coordinator but everything else was run on an ad-hoc basis and could be described as closer to a hobby than a profession although troupe members would still be paid.

Katrina led to the displacement of all the troupe members with the show co-ordinator among some other troupe members never to return. The Kings may have been disbanded had it not been for the personal circumstances of two troupe members, Kayla and Jasmine.

They had both lost their jobs and homes post-Katrina and spent a lot of time doing very little. The 'very little' included reminiscing and discussing drag performance art, often at The Place where only a couple of months earlier, they were on stage every week to a roaring crowd. Women began approaching them, asking when the show was coming back and the more this started to happen, the more Kayla and Jasmine thought they needed to try to put the show back on because their community needed it. The pair began picking up the pieces by getting in touch with troupe members to find out where they were and if they wanted to come back into the troupe. They managed to gather five drag kings to do a full 12-act show but this also meant that many of them were performing twice as well as in group acts but it helped to put the community back together. The first show took place on 12th November 2005 and continued on from there.

Due to the fact that many people had not returned and Kayla and Jasmine felt they could not continue with just five drag kings. Putting on a full 12-act show is a lot of work and even more pressure for the acts who have to choose their song, have the song approved, design a routine and rehearse that routine not to mention joint and group acts that also require coordinating schedules, for five drag kings, it was not plausible. That said, other drag kings started to return to the city but they still needed to expand the troupe. This is when they began the formal audition process which was something they had never done before. Now, in theory, anyone could become a member of The Kings. Of course the auditionees had to pass the recruitment process but it was no longer based on friendship. After Katrina, it became a professional performance group with a treasury and music manager as well as the coordinator.

The Kings was now a different kind of space with the focus on running the troupe more like a business and a community group. Also significant was the collapse of the Water Bowl Kings which meant that the former members of the Water Bowls were looking for a new troupe and even less entertainment crews were available for queer women. The Kings filled an important gap and audience members are extremely loyal. To repay the loyalty, The Kings use the treasury not only to pay the drag kings but also for 'troupe money' that is used for benefits, audience appreciation parties and community outreach. Outreach and benefits became particularly effective post-Isaac in 2012:

> *You know Elizabeth? Well her and her girlfriend got flooded out and they lost all their stuff. Her hair equipment, everything. They literally had to climb on the roof. Luckily they were ok but the troupe rallied together and did a fund raiser and bought them clothes and got her new equipment so she wouldn't lose her livelihood. (Harrie)*

A key change in how the troupe operates from pre-Katrina to post-Katrina is that they now have "group money." This is significant in how The Kings have changed since Katrina and how they have managed to stay so central to queer women's community. Post-Katrina, the show had been disbanded and the focus was on getting the show back together so that people could regain some normalcy and space in the queer community. Seven years later, having become a fully-fledged entertainment group with group funds and an official structure, Post-Isaac they were able to mobilise their community and utilise existing funds to organise fundraisers so that they not only helped queer women in their community with basic needs like clothing, they also helped Elizabeth replace equipment that she needed for her livelihood, something of which past research within gender and disasters has highlighted as very important to women's recovery. As discussed, generally, women are particularly associated with grassroots activism post-disaster (Bari 1998; Enarson et al 2007:138). For young women, post-Katrina, this did not appear to be the case as no set channel existed but post-Isaac, The Kings had more structure as a community group and engaged in grassroots organising to help allies in need.

In terms of the experience of lesbian, adult women, D'Ooge's short article raised the issue of adult lesbian women facing greater discrimination in recovery highlighting the intersection of sexuality with gender (D'Oooge 2008). This was not supported by the participants in this study, many of whom discussed a greater sense of acceptance from others. What they did point to though was a sense of feeling unsafe as a woman, specifically as queer, in public spaces as explored above in relation to violence, suggesting that for young queer women, they did not feel they faced specific discrimination related to Katrina but rather related to culture in general. In fact, the participants in the study who were involved with drag performance, whether as audience members, coordinators or performers, felt a far more positive change, that could be linked to the window of opportunity:

> *I know that, I mean not for me cos I wasn't around then but the Kings was like a big thing after Katrina, like I mean they came back pretty much straight away and it was a big thing for the gay women's community to have, for lesbians, not even just lesbians for the queer community each week, they had that on a Tuesday. (Jessica)*

Even though Jessica "wasn't around" in The Kings at the time of Katrina, the importance of post-Katrina time to the troupe had been passed down in stories within their community, becoming part of their own history and sense of belonging in the troupe. Queer communities across the globe have been active in post-disaster recovery but very little documents or recognise these strengths (Galliard et al (2017) thus is it highly important to document the role queer communities play in post-disaster recovery. That The Kings had

"come back" so quickly and filled an important gap in the lives of queer women and been there performing every single week ever since gave space to a community that some research shows had little recognition post-Katrina and faced discrimination (D'Ooge 2008; INCITE 2007). Furthermore, many people were still displaced even though they were "back" in the city living in temporary accommodation or rebuilding their homes without access to full amenities, trying to get back to "normal" life. The Kings was one of the first steps in their lives to "put things back together" where queer women could go and enjoy themselves and have a good time at a time when everything else was upside down. The importance of the presence of The Kings so soon after Katrina is emphasised across the stories of those who were not there like Jessica, demonstrating that Katrina was a significant part in the troupe's sense of community, on how they carved back their space for queer women so soon after the event itself.

Being in The Kings too was seen to be an important part of self-discovery and achievement:

> *I've moved up in the drag world, I started off small, just a little King following the rules and now I'm hosting and I'm telling them the rules and I'm involved in the auditions. I get to judge and mentor – I have these baby kings that look up to me now and it's so awesome. I had done a bit of drag with this lady a long, long time ago but it was after Katrina I got more involved with it. She really helped me get the confidence as well cos I had no idea I could even do something like that. It also made me feel closer to my dad as he was always very artsy-fartsy and theatrical. He was gay too so I felt like that's it, definitely I have to do that. When I feel that energy I feel that connection. (Harrie)*

Harrie used to be in the Water Bowl Kings before it was disbanded and then auditioned to be in The Kings. Being a drag king was part of Harrie's own spiritual journey that was also changed by Katrina when she "got more into drag." But Katrina was not the reason, although it may have been the catalyst along with a woman she knew through family who was involved in gender performance art. The reason being a drag king began to be so meaningful for Harrie was because of her dad, who died when she was little. Doing drag gives her a connection to him as a person and this is what drives her to move up in the world of drag. During the research, Harrie invited me to her first co-host performance and much later in the second phase of the research, six months later, I saw Harrie co-host again, this time every week. Her performance journey had come a long way and she had so much confidence that when she later talked about how far she had come in her interview, I realised that that first performance co-hosting was very important to her for herself but also to maintain a connection to her dad.

Personal journeys were very important in drag performance and everyone who participated had their own story to tell. Sunny's story about drag performance demonstrates that identities can be chosen, as suggested by Prins (2008) and even though subjective decision making cannot be separated from the latticework of social and cultural processes of identities and power relations, at the same time how power relations can be challenged and explored through queer activism as well as gender performance:

> *I had come out as queer in high school and I love the city and I love being from here and we're called the big easy for a reason, we're very laid back but after the flood, we became a lot less so and more mobilised after the federal flood but part of the reason I wanted to leave is because I wanted to be somewhere where there was an activist community and so I came back I and I was like where's the queer community where's my activism you know although I came to realise that people's activisms was through art usually you know we're so music and everything so I got really involved in performance art stuff like burlesque and drag and stuff but I would always do it on socio-political commentary.*
>
> *I produce my own shows [now] actually. I mean it took a few years to get there but I realised there's quite a lot of burlesque in the city but there wasn't any queer burlesque and also this need for wanting to have a safe space for the performers and the audience. Burlesque can be seen as really queer as it's all about the body and it's so much about a commentary about what our queer bodies are, what they look like, you know. So that's my view, a very tiny capsule of what I think about burlesque and so I started my own shows like two years ago. (Sunny)*

Sunny felt a cultural shift post-Katrina where people changed and became less laid back but she also realised that she had changed too, understanding that activism did not have to be in the traditional sense but could be seen through art. In New Orleans she noticed that activism was differently interpreted and was often seen in artistic expression, especially in queer culture and very true within drag performance where art could draw attention to a range of issues. The intention of drag is to draw attention to the fiction, invention and choice of gendered-sexualities as fluid and linked to agency. Drag is also often temporary as the artists become themselves again once the performance is over. The conceptual framework proposed in this thesis drew on feminist research on gender as something that we "do" rather than something that we have (Braidotti 2002; Connell 2009b). Gender can be "written on the body" and this is nowhere more clearly expressed than through the participants in this study who engage with drag as performance artists. Williams' (2002) points to young women experiencing gender as a "trying on process" influenced by

subcultures as well as more general USA culture, highlighting that youth can be a space where gender does not have to be taken seriously or as static

> *So I got into drag the first time was with a little drama school and me and my friend, Maria did I Love the Way You Lie by Eminem and I was Rihanna, I was like I can't do this I can't do this. I'm used to dancing on stage cos of dancing when I was younger, and it was just crazy it was phenomenal and there was hardly anyone there it was just like our friends and hardly any of the performers showed, so it turned into the Me and Maria show. Then she told me about The Kings, (Betty)*

Further linking on to Prins (2008) and the choices of identity, showing here that identity can also be creativity:

> *I am most proud of the fact that instead of the storm breaking me, it inspired me. I went to college for art instead of medicine. I felt empowered through art. We wrote poetry, took pictures, performed movement pieces, danced, anything we could possibly do to express how we felt about the storm. It empowered me because this storm showed us how little we had control over. Expression through art allowed me to take back the power. I was able to express my feelings of loss, confusion and pain through many artistic endeavours and I used the storm to inspire writing and performing in a show with my senior class (Beaux)*

Katrina became a tool for Beaux to create change and also gave her the ideas to develop her creative voice which came to be to use her performance to provide social and cultural critique, must like Sunny had begun. Additionally, Beaux's artistic activism further reinforces Sunny's observation that New Orleans' activism is often expressed through art. Expression of feelings to make sense of Katrina was an important part of recovery for Beaux and many others involved in gender performance art. Katrina showed Beaux that human beings have very little control over their physical environments or over the actions of others but rather than be overwhelmed by this, she found a way to make this knowledge empowering as well as not to fully accept that people cannot do things to try to make positive changes. By creating stories about her experiences and interpretations of events, she could "take back the power" through having a voice and a presence to tell her story to audiences so that others could try to understand, relate and just see.

Gender has been described by feminist scholars as a fiction and as something that involves a 'becoming' of identity that has to be worked on and monitored (Connell 2009b; Moore 1994; Rose 2005) and this research shows that gender performance art can help young women to re-write and re-imagine different kinds of gender identities but also that there are other creative means that do not necessarily involve bodily performance:

> *One of my aspirations is to make my experiences like a person of uncertain gender, all this stuff happened to me, I want to make it into a young adult novel, years of feeling everything really, really acutely I don't know maybe everyone's like that. I really feel as if I lived through a story and I really feel as though I want to make it into a story besides becoming an academic (Billie)*

As with Beaux and Phoebe, young women's engagement with creative expression such as writing was inspired by Katrina. Although their inspiration took different forms of expression, engaging with artistic expression enabled young women to explore their own life stories as well as comment on the wider implications. Here Billie demonstrates that she felt as though she lived through her own kind of story with the key themes that shaped her story centring around uncertainty of gender identity, feeling everything intensely and situating these themes of her growing up within the context of a young adult novel. Whilst she was unsure if it was "just her" who experienced growing up in that specific way or if it was everyone, a part of her felt her story could resonate to young adults. Whether she physically writes the book or not, Billie has written it in her mind and vocalises the story as her life story, such as within her life history interview for this study. As we talked in the interview itself, Billie connected the 'stories' of her life as themes that were specific to her own experiences as well as connecting her experiences to larger themes that in turn linked to how she thought other people may or may not experience growing up demonstrating how she was understanding how she fit within her world. Billie, a lover of young adult fiction and anime had imagined her own version of young adult life as a novel demonstrating how young women are able to re-read cultural texts such as media and alternative art such as drag and problematise what they think of as normal for themselves and for other people:

> *I was always an artistic person but with Katrina it made me appreciate the little things in life, just a picture or a performance they inspired me to be where I am now (with the troupe). Especially a lot the acts I started with doing drag they were a lot about me coming out, I call them coming acts, so a lot that, I take some of my own personal experience to it, to inspire me and get some truth into what I'm doing so I feel more inspired by Katrina. (Jessica)*

Katrina also inspired Jessica in many different ways. Drag performance, coming out, artistic and expression and sexual identity are inextricably linked to Jessica's Katrina experience. Katrina was her "coming out story" for her sexual identity but it also inspired later artistic performances when she got into drag king performance with The Kings. Jessica found she was able to use "the little things" in life and make them into performances about issues young, queer women face in their lives such as coming out and

negotiating queer relationships. For Jessica, getting "some truth in it" meant that audience members could view issues that they might or have faced or are facing themselves performed on stage which is important for queer women to "see" their kinds of relationships as much of what is available to us in terms of entertainment is often taken through a heteronormative lens which is unlikely to reflect the specific trappings of a queer female same sex relationship.

Much queer and feminist research shows how expression of feminine identities are multiple in sub and underground cultures (Bryant and Schofield 2007; Cowder 1998; Hanmer 2003; Ussher and Mooney-Somers 2000). For young women like Beaux and Jessica who began gender performance art not long after Katrina, it played a part in shaping the kind of performance artists they would become, often with performances delivering messages about queer relationships or critiques of inequalities. Here, we can see how young women and teenage girls are not passive consumers of what is seen to be normative and nor do they simply accept what is expected of them (Hollows 2000). The 'queer space' of disaster allowed for a re-reading, re-performing, re-imagining, troubling the status quo and problematising what is normalised. For Elizabeth, this reworking was related to coming out but also to changing her life more generally. Prior to Katrina, Elizabeth was battling drug and alcohol addictions and was not doing particularly well personally. She and her family were trapped in their home post-Katrina with only one way of getting out through the branches of the tree that was blocking the doors but Elizabeth used to also climb up onto the roof of her house and just sit alone. Many participants made reference to a space of aloneness that opened up after Katrina that was very specific to the aftermath of the storm as well as temporary but in this space of aloneness, many young women, including Elizabeth made new decisions about the course of their lives:

> *"Katrina [3 sec pause] just changed everything. Cos like after, you know, everything became more acceptable and everything became more understanding. When I went back to school, cos I was 17 so I still had a year left in school and people were different like going back I don't know, it was a really good thing I guess, everything just became acceptable and different and people were nicer and more appreciative. I'm guessing that everybody had that moment in that silence. The silence right after the hurricane had hit and it stopped raining and the birds weren't chirping, nothing was moving, everything was still I feel like everybody was like standing outside just taking it all in. It was awesome and it completely changed my town to become more accepting and more closer and everything like that. It was easier." (Elizabeth)*

Individual time in the silence was a significant space for Elizabeth to make new choices. For Elizabeth, it was the silence of her surroundings that were usually filled with the

sounds of nature, movement, people that created a feeling of something different as well as space for something different which was for her to make changes in her life. In that moment where everything stood still, she changed her life. Elizabeth also felt that everyone must have had a moment like that because her town had changed along with the people in it. She talked about everything being different as a good thing because people became more accepting and difference became more acceptable. In was in this space of acceptance that Elizabeth was able to get clean and come out as a lesbian:

> *I was really, really bad, I was on drugs and I was just bad but Katrina helped me realise this is the turning point in my life. I spent a lot of time thinking. I was realising about my sexuality too so it was all coming together...It was life changing. I appreciate Katrina but at the same I was like fucking Katrina! You realise who you are after something like that and then you have to triumph over it...I'm still clean, I'm still loving me life, I love my girlfriend, I love women and I love everything. If you did and are still living that hard working life that the really good life. End of it." (Elizabeth)*

In the study, everyone noted a moment, confirming what Elizabeth thought, not always of silence but a moment of change that marked pre-Katrina life with post-Katrina life that was characterised by something normal becoming changed or noticing something insignificant that became important. The time alone, being cut off from the distractions of her normal life that she felt made her a bad person were not accessible and in fact for Elizabeth, disruption was a good thing because normality to her was a dangerous and destructive path that actually had negative effects.

For Jessica, her Katrina moment was not pinpointed to an event but rather of her change in thought process:

> *Sexuality wasn't just for a man and a woman, but it was for women and women too. I discovered orgasm and what I liked, I wanted to try different things. I wanna say Katrina was a sexual exploration for me cos like I started dating girls and then I slept with this guy (who was my friend) then I realised that I wanted to be with girls it was sort of this revelation with wanted I wanted sexually, it was something I had never ever felt before like with a man so it really did open me up sexually. It was almost like, so this disaster happened, what else more can happen? You know what am I fighting against? It's this one little thing that I always wanted to try what could be bad about it? And then it wasn't bad it was more about me finding myself. (Jessica)*

Katrina led Jessica to question life generally because in her eyes so much had happened she could not imagine anything worse and therefore, there was nothing to fight against

which  meant she could try different things. Experiencing Katrina at this particular time in her life opened Jessica up to new possibilities, describing Katrina as "a sexual exploration" which was particularly defined by her coming out story, something she clearly identifies herself as a significant event for her after Katrina. Jessica's coming out story was an awakening of her sexuality which was very much tied to sexual experiences and intimate relationships where through dating girls, a feeling that she had previously seen as "a little thing" was not little anymore. Exploring her desire for women led her to significant experiences including her first orgasm. This exploration became something more than just "trying something different" it was a revelation of who she wanted to be with in intimate relationships. In the past, this little thing of wanting to be with girls was characterised in her head as something bad but after Katrina Jessica began to question this and it became a journey where she found that liking girls was not a bad thing at all and she found herself through finding her sexuality. This journey involved negotiating relationships with others as well as with herself:

> *Definitely with reading Harry Potter and school and having less to do with my home life really helped me cope a lot. I wanna say that from Katrina til now there have been a lot of things that I have accepted about my life. Katrina was a big eye opener, it made me realise how much I loved New Orleans, how much I love my life and my friends and they are still my friends to this day , the new friends, being involved in this community helps me cope. If Katrina hadn't happened I don't know where I would have been. I don't know if I'd have been able to come out. I'd probably be married right now with some random guy that I'd have met in college. It's the "what if?" factor. What if it had never happened? Would I still have met Harrie? I'm grateful that my life has taken the path that it has now. I've found myself and I've found a wonderful family, my friends as well, a wonderful community that I'm a part of (Jessica).*

Time alone and time to socialise were both important aspects of growing up and coming out after Katrina for Jessica. Importantly, time alone also meant time away from "home life" which was characterised by conflict between Jessica's parents and culminated in her mum finally breaking up with her violent father. However, Jessica's mum struggled to understand her coming out phase and so being at home was still challenging for Jessica, even though her father no longer lived with them. Along with her ways of coping, Jessica felt Katrina was a big eye opener that expanded how she felt about people, family, friends and community. She felt particularly settled and supported when she became more active in the queer community through The Kings. One of the many good things that came out of joining The Kings was Harrie.

Jessica and Harrie met as a result of The Kings and for Jessica, she felt had she never joined, she may never have met her and had Katrina never have happened, she may never have come out as queer at all. Thinking about the "what ifs" without Katrina as the catalyst for so many events in Jessica's life made her question whether she would be in the happy place she is in now. Interestingly, there is little evidence that disasters can create positive transformation even though this is one of the hopes of disaster actors. For Jessica though, and others like Elizabeth and Beaux, Katrina really did change their lives for the better.

What Katrina revealed to Jessica was that her normal life was not what she wanted suggesting that without Katrina she might have just married "some guy" from college rather than being in the happy, fulfilling relationship with Harrie she has now. This could be because Katrina opened up a unique space for young women to reflect and question their lives and choices, often resulting in a desire to explore positive change. For Jessica this involved space to explore queer sexuality which might never have opened up. Katrina was devastating as Jessica and all other participants highlighted earlier on and many saw themselves as lucky for surviving not just the storm but the aftermath of violence. However, after Katrina, Jessica's life improved. Not only was she able to come out as queer but her mum had also managed to finally break away from her violent dad which meant that her mum's life also improved. Through being able to come out as queer and explore her sexuality, Jessica also found a community that forms a part of her 'chosen family' as well as her partner, Harrie as well as friends. Harrie was also integral for Jessica's mum to come to accept Jessica as gay, all of which are linked by Jessica to the space opened up by Katrina to question her life.

Space to think was also important but making their own choices did not happen in a vacuum and decision-making was often very difficult, whether participants were able to make their own choices or not. For example, aside from the struggles Billie faced with her aunt at the time of her evacuation post-Katrina, Billie found ways of negotiating her identity in her own way:

> *I just have such a passion for books and I am kind of a loner no not a loner just that I'm comfortable doing things on my own so yeah I had a lot of thinking space! (Billie)*

Having a lot of thinking space was both good and bad for Billie and her tone was sarcastic when she talked about having this alone space. Billie was trying to negotiate a bad living situation with her aunt where she had evacuated to with her mum as well as her relationship with her mum being quite tricky. Billie was forcibly displaced to a new town in a new school living in a house where none of the occupants (all of them family) understood her. Space to 'simply' be herself then was gratefully accepted. To find this

space, Billie drew on her personal strengths and as someone who had always been comfortable on her own, this was to help her deal with displacement. Being themselves was highly significant but this was much harder for younger participants under the care of parent(s) or guardian(s). Some participants have to walk a thin line between who they feel they are as subjects and who they think they should be for others. This was particularly the case for Betty, but during Isaac, Betty was house-sitting for a friend and was able to control how she experienced the hurricane and spend her time with people she felt understood her better. However, 'growing up' for Betty has involved greater involvement with alcohol and post-disaster (both Isaac and Katrina) young women in the study identified drinking alcohol as a common coping mechanism. This is interesting because alcoholism post-disaster is often associated with men (Ariyabandu 2016; 2006; Kissinger 2009; Mishra 2009; Rajakumar et al 2008; Wikrama and Kasper) driven by GAD literature (Jollu 2004). Very little research explores the social dimensions of alcohol and even less explores it in relation to women and young women such as clubs and bars as an outlet to relieve stress, provide space and access to community:

> *Isaac, actually I wasn't worried about. I knew Isaac wasn't going to be that bad anyway but it was also because I was older so I could just have fun and drink and do what I wanted When Katrina hit being able to drink would have been nice [laughs] but it didn't involve drinking at that time! Isaac did, I was proper getting drunk cos it was Mardi Gras and then Decadence and it fell altogether so I was like let's get drunk during Isaac, it's fine. Even though it was a small storm it made it a bit better because I didn't have to be at home. I guess it kind of made it a little easier cos I was able to be around other people and get to do stuff, not a lot considering there was no power but it helped out a little bit. (Betty)*

There is very little public space for young women without alcohol. It was also important for those young women who were teenagers at the time of Katrina but 'older' teenagers at the time of Isaac where the emphasis on self-discovery was more significant:

> *Definitely drinking, if I'd hang out and be nervous and I'd be drinking so it would make me feel closer to people and of course it's like a truth serum so u start saying everything that's on your mind so it's one of those things where I definitely got a lot closer to people by talking and chain smoking and stuff. Socialising has mostly be positively it's always a lot more fun with someone else. (Jessica)*

What is interesting here is that alcohol post-disaster is associated with bonds of friendship following trauma whereas previously, alcohol has been associated with negative portrayals of male gender role behaviour. That said, the move towards masculinities in

gender and disaster research suggests there will be an in-depth exploration of how and why alcohol is often used as a coping mechanism. For the findings of this study, alcohol is associated by some participants with the positive outcomes of "coming out" and engaging with community but consuming alcohol should not then be seen as a positive coping mechanism for any.

What is interesting about Betty's story though is that drinking space opened up also gave her access to her queer community and post-Isaac, allowed her to be in charge of her own post-storm experience unlike Katrina where she was not involved in decision-making at all:

> *I've definitely grown a lot in the past 7 years and I'm really glad I joined the troupe cos I can be myself I've been going to The Pub since I was 16, 17? But joining the troupe really opened my eyes and try different things and see the reactions I get and I feel like now is the time that I'm getting to finally find my style I don't have to keep secrets, I can be like this is me, I've learned a lot from different people in the troupe. It's how I came to the term pan sexual. It was Jessica who explained it to me, I was like am I? You know what you're right. If you're not around the gay community you would be in a boat without a paddle. (Betty)*

At home, Betty has to keep her sexual and gender identities a secret but whilst house sitting for friends in the city at the time of Isaac she was able to be herself. This also involved drinking a lot of alcohol. This environment then for her she sees as more positive because she is not hiding who she is even though excessive drinking is seen as a negative behaviour with negative health implications. The space was identified as important, particularly when it was based on interest, for example Betty found the collective space of the The Kings as an avenue to know herself better.

Collectivity and social networks were important to the young women who participated in the study in multiple ways. For those who were members of The Kings, being involved with the troupe was significant in their lives. The Kings creates a space to explore other identities, thereby conforming by day and revolting by night. Transformation and empowerment are not always clear cut and can involve some difficult decisions. Collective space post-disaster often focussed around women's organising (James et al 2014; Neal and Phillips 1990; Bari 1998; Enarson et al 2007:138; Enarson 2000a; Laska et al 2008:19). In addition, it is particularly thought that there are benefits to the community as whole or has wider implications than simply 'women's empowerment' (David 2012). The Kings collective space differs because it was started for pleasure and evolved into a community focus as well as entertainment.

Some participants talked about their ideas for the kinds of spaces that would have supported them further post-Katrina as well as sometimes at the time of the interview:

> *So many people that are that age they do wanna socialise and like here you have to drink to socialise but I think there should be more positive settings and other things that do inspire young adults, That's what the healing centre is meant to be about but we need a lot more stuff for that, that will really help people (Phoebe)*

Phoebe sees some of the issues with lack of appropriate social space as specific to New Orleans. This makes sense in the context of New Orleans as a place of never-ending partying, a place where one can smoke inside bars and drink alcohol on the street and gamble all night long, in fact never needing to stop. This is picked up on further by Nikki who talked about what it was like when she first moved to New Orleans with her friend:

> *I came here from South Carolina with my friend and we rented a house and like two weeks she was just losing it. It can be like that here because it doesn't stop so she was out drinking and partying and just losing it and I had to get hold of her and pack her and her stuff back home. I had to do an intervention. New Orleans is not for everyone. It can just suck you right in and mess you up if you're like that (Nikki)*

Alcohol and decadence and partying do seem to be a way of life for young women in New Orleans. The Kings' are testament to this who take their Tuesday night slot at midnight and they always play to big crowd. As Nikki highlights above, it is not easy to combine day and night life in New Orleans because the city never stops. Indeed, both Megan and Sarah Jane struggled to balance their lives specifically post-Katrina when they were trying to come to terms with what had happened to the city. Although Nikki's story highlights that New Orleans can be problematic for young people in times of normalcy as well because of the party lifestyle with few alternatives available. That said, as Phoebe illustrates, more space has opened up that is not focussed around drinking like The Healing Center and the LGBT Community Center.

Being able to make their own decisions is very important to young women but as young women gain more autonomy, decision-making is not always seen as good thing with some young women wishing they had made different choices. Furthermore, across the age groups, there are things such as space to engage in community that does not involve alcohol and space away from family that were not available at the time of Katrina but that young women thought would have been helpful to their recovery from Katrina as well as in their daily lives.

**Summary**

Both collective and individual spaces are important for young women post-Katrina. Individual space is more linked to being able to make their own decisions but some also identified time alone as important to reflect and think in order to make decisions, often with positive results. Collective space based on a chosen interest has also been crucial to young women in the sample, particularly The Kings. Being in a supportive environment where people do not judge how you express yourself is an important element not just of coming out but of finding yourself, particularly collective space, such as an existing or new interest or a specific need.

Needs were not generally addressed by specific services for young women and teenage girls post-Katrina. The participants in this sample who wanted to talk about what would have helped them post-Katrina were quite vocal in the kinds of services that would have supported them, most drawing attention to the need for positive space away from family, with one participant explicitly highlighting the need to have an 'alcohol free' environment for young people and for queer people generally. As many social spaces for queer people do involve drinking, this could be one way to create new positive space.

Throughout the thesis, young women have highlighted times where they were made to feel vulnerable because they are young women and/or queer women. Harrie's experience at the gas station where she realised she could not defend herself, Rita's daily experience of being cat called and feeling as though it is something you have to accept as women as well as Harrie, Jessica and Beaux highlighting that being out in public space as young and/or queer women made them feel vulnerable highlights that even if violence does not increase post-disaster, young women are likely to feel threatened throughout their lives in public spaces highlighting that whilst it is important to tackle GBV post-disaster, cultures that make women, especially young women and queer women feel vulnerable in the first place must be undone. When young women have the option to make their own choices, both collective and individual spaces can create positive change.

The thesis also supports these positive implications of engaging with community space, particularly based on common interest, however, it is important not to focus only on collectivity in order to avoid or break down feminist myths referred to above (Cornwall 2007a). Collectivity must be chosen and not enforced for it to have positive benefits. Individual space provides the space needed to renegotiate norms, make 'big decisions' and reflect on life choices. Social and cultural norms do make young women feel that they have to be secretive, ashamed, hide the "bad things" of sexuality but Katrina opened up a space

to question these norms and the young women in this sample produced their own readings by rethinking their feelings about pre-existing ideas in their lives and where they have space to do so, are able to make individual choices with positive effects. This is shown to be subjective in this thesis and individual and also complex, mixing with collectivity. This is interesting and could be linked to the relatively new focus on self-care, wellness, wellbeing and mindfulness.

For many of the young women in the study, disruption from their normal routines changed their personalities and habits for the better. For Elizabeth, she decided to stop taking drugs and take charge of her life. For Betty, she was put in a situation where she had to develop confidence and learnt that she could talk to people and that it was not as scary as she used to think it was. Betty also draws attention to the tenuousness of normality and how fragile it is because actually, daily life is shrouded in uncertainty. However, being able to do 'normal' things helped young women take control of their lives, even if what was normal after Katrina was not the same as what was normal before.

# PART SEVEN – CONCLUSIONS

## Negotiating Growing Up, Genders and Sexualities, What is a Disaster Anyway?

Gender affects how a disaster is experienced with women often being disproportionately affected (Bradshaw 2014; 2015; 2004; Enarson 2012a; 2002; 1998; Fothergill 1998; Fordham 2011; 2004; 1998). Within this, other intersecting identities can increase or decrease resilience and vulnerabilities post-disaster. To date, very little has been known about how class, particularly middle and upper classes, youth and sexualities affect the gendered experience of disaster and this study has explored how these identities intersect to produce unique experiences, needs and interests. When gender intersects with class status, youth and sexualities, the disaster experience is changed but like other identities, none are static protectors or risky vulnerabilities but rather intertwine in a complex way. Overall, it can be said that disruption from their normal routines caused much stress and anxiety and because younger women felt that their concerns were not considered, they felt a sense of powerlessness. However, this space opened up a capacity to question their normal lives and many changed their lifecourse plans for the better having positive implications on their personalities and their habits. Being able to do 'normal' things though helped young women take back or claim power in their lives, even where normal life after Katrina was very different to normal life before.

This study demonstrates that when young people 'grow up' during mass social change, their lives and experiences can be altered, changed, even erased as suggested in earlier work by Bucholtz (2002). Disaster is also thought of as a process that gives rise to such changes and in the lives of young women and teenage girls specifically, who are already going through many "first times" in their lives, a disaster can act as a catalyst supporting the research by Fordham and Ketteridge (1998) who have suggested that disasters can speed up things that would have happened anyway as well as introduce something new.

When young women grow up in the wake of a natural disaster like Hurricane Katrina, their lives, like everyone else affected by disaster are altered. However, their experiences, needs and interests are different from adult women. Following on from GAD literature, the study sought to problematise traditional knowledge about women's experiences post-disaster. Cornwall (2007a) suggested that feminist scholars also need to revisit existing

concepts and knowledge in order to undo gender myths and fables that no longer speak to contemporary women and feminism (2007a). This thesis looked to unpack who women are post-disaster through going back to the very notion of what a disaster is. By asking who women are within the context of a disaster and broadening the scope to include the notion of crisis, the study begins to fill the gap in knowledge about the experiences of young women. The study found that what is important to young women post-disaster is centred around the processes already happening or about to happen in their lives that can be exacerbated by disaster processes, particularly evacuation and disruption to education.

Before highlighting the main contributions, this conclusion briefly summarise the key findings. Whilst young women's concerns aligned with those of adult women at times, their experiences within what is known about gendered experiences post-disaster are different and this is explicitly linked to their stages in lifecourse.

In particular, the Katrina literature shows how important intersectionality is a lived experience resulting in some groups being more or less vulnerable than others (David 2012; Enarson 2012; D'Ooge 2008; Gault et al 2005; Willinger 2008). The original focus of this study was to try to explore 'known' vulnerabilities of race, class and poverty from the perspective of young women. However, it was not possible to access this group and this is one of the limitations of the research. Those that could be most vulnerable post-Katrina do not have a voice in this study and this group of young women warrants future attention to explore the impacts of Katrina on their lives. This research indicates that middle-classness could protect teenage girls in some ways and so it is possible that families without access to resources faced greater struggles that could have had the largest impact on their teenage daughters.

Very little has been known about the intersections of youth, gender and sexualities post-disaster. This study found that as identities and processes, gender, sexualities and youth are linked and create unique experiences. For example, the literature demonstrates that the intersections of race, gender and class resulted in specific vulnerabilities (Gault et al 2008). Further research showed the intersections of gender, class and femininity (David). Combining both of these sets of intersections in this research it is possible to say that 'middle-classness' can serve to protect teenage girls and young women to some extent because their parents have the capacity to evacuate and their parents often are in jobs that continue to pay salaries post-disaster. However, many young women of working age in the study who did not live at home were in precarious working situations with few managing to keep their jobs and most spending time unemployed for up to two months post-Katrina. Middle-class parents do have economic capacities but not enough to support their older children in rebuilding or resettling.

Middle class status also does not protect against the psychological aspects of experiencing a disaster. All of the young women who participated in this study highlighted concerns around traumatic experience that life could change so suddenly and so devastatingly. However, many in the sample saw themselves as lucky. Lucky that all of their homes were repairable if they had been damaged, lucky that they had not lost anyone because of Katrina, lucky that they did not have to evacuate to the Superdrome or live in a FEMA trailer. This did not mean though that participants were not angry at the aftermath of Katrina with many expressing concern over how the storm was dealt with by official channels, particularly the militarised response. Among 'older' participants, including one 17 year old, young women often discussing drinking alcohol as a coping mechanism. Substance abuse, especially alcoholism is usually associated with men post-disaster (Ariyabandu 2016; 2009; 2006). However, some research within the psychology disciplines suggest that youth are likely to turn to alcohol and drugs to cope post-disaster but there has been little sociological focus on the issues. Drinking alcohol is quite complex in this study as even though for some it is associated with negative coping, for many others drinking alcohol is associated with community, connecting with other people and recovery. Younger women did not have access to these kinds of spaces but also noted that being able to reconnect with friends through school was a significant part in their recovery. However, many were displaced out of state with family and they had to find other ways to cope. This quite often involved time alone where they would watch films and box sets, read and write or sit in the quiet and think. The time alone also resulted in a new space that opened up in their worlds that enabled younger participants to think about what they wanted to do with their lives. This was particularly the case for Elizabeth who had battled drug addictions throughout her teens who, in the strange quiet after Katrina, decided to change her life.

Most young women in the study did not have any caregiving responsibilities at the time of Katrina. The exception here was Beaux who was responsible for her younger sister in the immediate aftermath whilst her family tried to locate her mum who was missing. This placed an overwhelming amount of stress on her at 17 years old and suggests, as other research has done that young people do not always have the same coping mechanisms as adults (Fothergill and Peek 2007; Rashid and Michaud 2000). Furthermore, the two participants who now have children themselves discussed how they would do things differently because they are now mothers. Becoming a mother for the two participants in the study changed both their views around evacuation and for Kayla also made her question whether putting down roots in a storm-prone city was a good idea. Since having children, their children's needs became the highest priorities. Until the time that both young women chose to have their own children though, their concerns lay mainly with exploring their identities and making decisions that would affect their lives in positive

ways. Exploring identities and making positive decisions about their lives was reflected in the stories of many other participants too suggesting that lack of caregiving responsibilities can provide a space for positive change so long as this change is led by young women's own needs, interests and desires.

Recent literature within disasters has focused on adolescent girls (Coalition for Adolescent Girls 2012; Tanner 2010; Plan International 2013). Whilst drawing attention to teenage girls' specific needs is a good thing, focussing on girls as 'adolescents' reduces young women's experiences to the reproductive and the maternal whereas the findings of this study show that teenage girls and young women are unlikely to see themselves in relation to either. Rather the teenage girls and young women in this study were concerned about their future life choices and relationships with others demonstrating that understanding teenage and girls and young women in their own right is important to understanding their needs, interests and desires post-disaster.

In this study, a lifecourse division could be made across the participants, where generally the participants fell into two broad groups - under 18's in the care of parents or guardians and over 18's not in the care of parents or guardians – that affected their experiences post-Katrina. Overall, under 18's had a challenging time around lack of decision-making power and feeling excluded from the evacuation process. For some, confinement during displacement was the norm, where youth intersected with gender and the level and degree of confinement depended very much on their stage in lifecourse.

The 'age divide' was particularly evident within the College – School age divide, where college-aged young women were able to travel to other parts of the country and gain new experiences whereas school aged young women either had to re-enrol somewhere else or wait for their school to open, often based on the decisions of their parents. Most school-aged young women also missed at least two months of schooling and did not benefit from the post-Katrina goodwill of free college tuition fees that opened up to college-aged young women. These over 18's group were able to take advantage of college places across the country and experience a new place as well as explore their identities. However, young women over 18 also had to make their own decisions about evacuation and return which often involved some complex decisions around relationships with others and themselves.

Teenage girls also were heavily protected by their parents and this at times made them feel stifled and as if they were invisible because parents were unlikely to explain to them what was happening. Parental protection though did not last forever and when young women were 'out in the world' this is when they began to feel the threat of violence. The fear of violence seemed to be felt because they are women not because there was a

hurricane. Many participants told stories about the threat of gendered violence to others or a feeling they experienced themselves as they grew up and were "out" in the public world and how feeling violence is part and parcel of being a woman and even more so if your gender identity and expression is non-normative with young women highlighting that when they were dressed in drag or dressed in a way that outed them physically as queer as feeling more threatened. These findings expand on feminist literature on women's bodies as sites for gendered discourse of power at both national and community levels (Ahmed 2002; Jayawardena 1995; 1982; Jeffries 2014; Levine 2000; Yuval-Davis 1997). Rather than suggesting that GBV increases post-disaster, the young women in this study suggest that fear of violence becomes heightened but moreover, that this fear increases as they grow up and become more 'out' in the public world as young women and as queer young women. When this also coincides with disaster disruption, such as Harrie's story at the gas station during evacuation when a man offered her money, young women can feel extremely vulnerable. It is the cultures of the threat of male violence that exacerbates these feelings of vulnerability more than anything else.

## Coming Out of Katrina: "Everything that happened after Katrina lead me to this place" (Jessica)

The findings of this thesis begin to address the gap in knowledge about how young adults' lives are affected post-disaster, specifically looking at young women who were asked to reflect on 'growing up' after Katrina. Young women's experiences reveal the lived realities of the normative positioning of women as mothers, caregivers and adult, in general. They are both simultaneously confined by these parameters as well as inventing new space to be seen, heard and find solace.

Past research within Gender and Disasters has suggested moving away from the binary distinction to include a third space where home, work and community intersect in order to better reflect the complexities of lived realities (Milroy and Wismer 1994 cited in Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:82) but little has emerged that has explored this area of enquiry. Often, our myths are based on assumptions that adult women's gendered interests are the same for all women, including their girl children (Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2007:142). Whilst this study draws attention to one group of young women, because this is an under-researched area, particularly when also looking at the intersections of gender and youth with sexualities, there is much scope for future research. Within the findings of this thesis, there are interesting angles that could be explored in greater depth in the future. Young

women's access to employment post-disaster was an issue that was raised within other conversations, but looking back at the analysis, exploring employment explicitly would give insights into how young women negotiate their livelihoods in the event of a disaster. In the USA context in the service industry, they are not under obligation to pay staff during storm evacuations and many middle-class young women appear to work within this industry so it might have a significant impact on their future lives. The theoretical approach of the thesis originally began to engage with Trauma Theory, particularly the notion of post-traumatic growth (PTG). However, there was not enough space in the thesis to fully explore PTG in a meaningful way and so this would be an interesting perspective to take in future analysis. One of the key findings is around how young women create and use space, both collectively and individually but very little is known about young women's organising post-disaster especially when this intersects with queer sexualities. Recent research by Gaillard et al (2017) shows that gender minorities have important capacities and strengths as well as vulnerabilities and the important roles they have played in recovery have been overlooked across the world. This suggests that there are many more collective spaces, both based on gender interests, youth and/or sexualities that could be visibilised. Overall, the gap in knowledge about young women's experiences post-disaster is so large that it signifies there is much to do in order to paint a fuller picture, and indeed build a matrix to understand how young women recover post-disaster.

This study shows that young women and teenage girls have different experiences and are particularly concerned about their decision-making power whether they lack the capacity to make decisions or they are making important decisions for the first times about their lives. Being themselves and finding themselves became very important to the participants of the study. Living life more fully in a bigger and better way is an overarching theme and one that sometimes led participants to come out of the closet and ask others to accept them as they are, as queer. These revelations came at different points and depended on many other factors too that took place on their personal journeys, catalysed by Katrina. Individual space and time to "be yourself" was also important and Katrina, by destroying most of the infrastructure of normal life, often 'accidentally' provided young women and teenage girls with this space. Many of the young woman in the study felt that they did not 'fit' before Katrina and their experiences could broadly be described as queer that at the time, made them feel at odds with their everyday lives. Within this strange, new space opened up by Katrina many young women took time to reflect on their lives and most made changes to improve their lives. This included making decisions about their futures, in terms of career as well as coming out as queer, gay, lesbian or pansexual. However, it was also found that heteronormative views, especially from friends, family and communities affected how young women felt about themselves and their gendered-

sexualities which could be particularly difficult if they were also beginning to explore queer identities. Negotiating this space has meant that at times, young women have felt the need to hide who they are to some circles in their lives.

It was suggested above in the review of the literature that by defining the experiences of all women by the experiences of only one group, that their concerns can be misrepresented when they do not fit this mould, such as young women and teenage girls. Even the 'newer' space of adolescent girls continues to link girls with caregiving, maternity and reproduction. The young women and teenage girls in this study rarely discussed caregiving responsibilities although some young women talked about caregiving support within relationships and friendships. This was particularly interesting in Harrie's story as she was both the caregiver and the 'breadwinner' in her relationship with Trudy which begins to highlight the complex differences of queer relationships to assumed heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, it also draws attention to the different challenges faced post-disaster for queer women as other participants in same-sex relationships at the time also identified one person within a stronger caregiving role than the other but not at all attached to gender identification of masculinity and femininity in terms of their personal identities.

A key theme to emerge in this thesis is the reinvention of space by young women and teenage girls linking up to feminist scholarship more generally (Lee and Zhou 2004; Mason 2009; McRobbie 1994; Surkan 2003). Many participants found a way to use time alone that was often enforced by evacuation and displacement as an individual space to reflect on their lives and make big decisions about their futures. As well as this, a collective space was also reinvented when The Kings were reconstituted post-Katrina. Women and men do not use space in the same way and this is no different in times of disaster where community and cultural space can support disaster recovery, at times enabling women to come to terms with disaster through collectivity and social networks (Enarson 2000a; Saito 2012). The Kings are now an active community group as well as an entertainment troupe and have provided much needed support to the queer community in times of crisis which include post-disaster support but also include likeminded people to help each other to be able to be themselves. Whilst this had many benefits for young women over 18 years old (although Betty confessed she had actually been going to The Kings' venue since she was around 16 years old), younger participants are excluded from entertainment spaces because of their age. Not only did young, queer women have to find collective space on their own, but younger members in the sample who talked about the need for community or an understanding place to go away from family, were unable to benefit from these spaces. This further demonstrates the struggles faced by 'middle-aged' teenage girls who

see themselves as able to make their own decisions, but are often at loggerheads with their parents. Rather than being allowed to have complete free-rein, simply being asked their opinions and being considered by the adults in their lives could be enough to make teenage girls' post-disaster experience less stressful demonstrating that it is not only decision-making that is important but feeling valued.

As pointed to within the literature review in this thesis, these findings show how gender performance art is complex and cannot be thought of simply as 'women performing as men.' There is intricate gender role play as described by some of the participants that allows them to explore aspects of their own identities as well as provide social and political commentary about events like Katrina and relationships with others. Whilst gender performance art is often a collective experience, some participants in the study were independent artists and did not belong to a troupe. However, even where participants were in a troupe, the planning of an act could be a highly individual experience, one that takes much planning. At least a week in advance of the show, sometimes conceived of over many months and sometimes also involving collaborations with two or three different artists, gender performance art is a meaningful expression and something that all of the participants take seriously. There is a focus on re-writing traditional heterosexual roles for queer audiences so that characters are relatable, including female masculinities and 'ultra' feminine roles. Performing drag involves both collectivity and individual space and a complex balance of the two was very important part of the healing process post-Katrina but more than this, was also an important part of young women's identity formation and sense of self.

Gender has been well explored post-disaster by feminist scholars and even though there are still areas that need development, we know much about women's gendered experiences (Ariyabandu and Wickramasinghe 2005; Bradshaw 2013; Enarson and Morrow 1998; Enarson and Chakrabarti 2009; Enarson and Meyreles 2004; David and Enarson 2012). When gender is read in relation to sexuality though, very little is known about women's disaster experience. In fact, sexuality in general post-disaster has been neglected despite some research pointing to some crucial differences in experiences, needs and interests some of which have resulted in discrimination (D'Ooge 2008). When gender and sexuality is explored in relation to youth post-disaster, even less is known. This study brings these identities together drawing on the bodies of work within youth studies, feminist and queer theories and gender and disaster research to show that young women find their sexual and/or gender identities highly important as they grow up, associating them with sexual experiences as well as with relationships, communities and sense of self. Sexual identities can cause much anxiety and stress for young women, as well

as bring pleasure and acceptance, particularly where their sexualities are not 'standard heterosexual.' The greatest worry emerges from fear of lack of acceptance from friends and family. The greatest support emerged from feeling part of a community, both physically such as The Kings as well as virtually such as online forums. Post-Katrina, all participants, particularly queer participants felt that space to be understood and feel accepted to be themselves was highly important. Those that could access The Kings talked about it as a space that gave queer women somewhere to get back to normal and indeed, this importance was passed down to younger, newer members as stories about the role of The Kings in the queer community. Those who could not access The Kings as a queer space were mainly excluded because of their age, being too young to go to 'adult' spaces, even though they talked about the need to have somewhere to go. Little information or knowledge exists about the experiences of LGBTQI and queer-identified communities post-disaster but this study reveals that community space for queer women can be very important at times of normalcy as well as times of crisis. A key issue is that much queer space is often organised in 'adult' environments meaning that younger women (under 18) may not be able to access them and this is something that participants identified as an area that needs to change.

Through a complex intersection of collective and individual space young women have reimagined their gendered-sexualities, sometimes through gendered performance art either as performers or audience members and other times, simply exploring their desires and through this queer space that Katrina created, were able to redefine their normal lives into a new, more positive and happier kind of normal that involved many kinds of change such as coming out as queer, exploring gender identity and regenerating a community space. Sexualities and gender are important aspects of life, particularly when 'growing up' where gender and sexual identities develop and when Katrina hit, she disrupted the lives of young women which included their gendered-sexualities but rather than destroying them, many young women here chose to make this impact into positive change even though they were invisibilised.

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